

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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EAST TIMOR a fire fuelled by imperialism



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Labour's morality

Labour's morality is evident for all to see. Even after the government suspended arms shipments to Indonesia, Tony Blair could still tell Labour's National Executive that 'the arms issue is not the issue at all. Cancelling the arms sales to Indonesia would result in a bill of hundreds of millions of pounds.' The implications are clear. Once things have settled down in East Timor to imperialism's satisfaction, arms deliveries will restart. This is one aspect of Blair's 'new moral purpose'; defending the arms multinationals.

Labour's new high mindedness may be compared to Major's disastrous 'back to basics' campaign. But this would be to miss the point: there are real teeth to this new drive. Blair's response to news of pregnant 12-year-olds was to say that they 'should not be on the street at night'. Curfews for children are curfews for working class children. Now sex education will be designed to promote the importance of marriage, stigmatising lone parents, those who choose to co-habit or are gay. It is a moral tyranny, but it is also a form of class tyranny. Jack Straw's vicious denunciation of trav-

history, and now public spending has fallen below 40% of GNP for the first time in over 30 years. Labour is sitting on a public sector surplus of £10-12 billion. Is it going to use this to tackle poverty? Of course not. Alastair Darling, Social Security secretary, in introducing his 'campaign' against 'social exclusion' told us that 'poverty today is complex'. So complex, apparently, that he could not tell *The Times* whether a child should have at least one new pair of shoes per year. In reality, 'complex' is Labour's code for saying that it is not going to spend any money in solving it.

It was the policy of neo-liberalism, the unfettering of the market, that nearly tripled poverty in Britain during the years of the Tory governments. Labour has continued with this, and is intent on doing things which even the Tories were incapable of, such as privatising both the Post Office and air traffic control. Its refusal to implement any transport strategy means that private rail companies continually demand more money for a deteriorating service. 'Public-private partnership' is Labour's mantra: in reality this means the private sector shafts the public. Thus the funding of the NHS building programme through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) will result in new hospitals having 20-30% fewer beds than the ones they replace. This will force huge and unproven changes in length of bed stay and clinical productivity. Meanwhile the NHS is about to face its worst funding crisis ever. Then there is the succession of enormous computing cock-ups, many of them in Jack Straw's Home Office, all of which demonstrate that the public-private partnership involves huge dole-outs for the private sector with rubbish in return.

And whilst Labour dreams up ever more absurd means of attracting private investment to the London underground, the network falls apart ever more rapidly, whole sections of it closing down on a daily basis.

We have to say again that Labour did not promise anything else. When the left talks of Labour's 'betrayals', we have to ask where they were when Labour set out its stall before and during the general election. We have to ask the left why they told us to vote for Labour. We have to ask them why they failed to denounce Labour during the onslaught on Yugoslavia; why they will not openly oppose Labour but instead speak of building meaningless 'alternatives'. One can only assume that they still do not believe that Labour is deadly serious about what it is doing, that they will not admit it is through and through a party of the ruling class.



BOB SHEPHERD

At the end of July the 'Peace Agreement' in Ireland reached a dead end (see FRFI 150). The Ulster Unionist Party refused to enter a power-sharing executive with Sinn Féin before the IRA decommissioned its arms. Senator George Mitchell, who had been involved in drawing up the original Good Friday agreement, agreed to hold a review of the whole process in September.

The period leading up to the start of the Mitchell review was dominated by Mo Mowlam's supposed inquiry into whether the IRA ceasefire was still intact. This was brought about by the RUC chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, claiming that the IRA had killed alleged RUC informer Charles Bennett and citing warnings given by the IRA to young anti-social elements to leave the north of Ireland. The UUP demanded that Sinn Féin be excluded from the peace process on the basis that the IRA had broken the ceasefire.

This conveniently ignored the ongoing terror campaign waged by loyalist groups against the Catholic community across the north of Ireland. In Portadown on 31 July a loyalist armed with an AK47 assault rifle and a handgun was spotted heading towards the nationalist Obins Street. He was overpowered and disarmed by local people who bravely tackled him.

In Larne there is an escalating campaign of attacks. On 9 August the home of a Catholic man was petrol bombed. In the early hours of 28 August the home of East Antrim SDLP Assembly member Danny O'Connor was petrol-bombed. On 30 August a pipe bomb was pushed through the letterbox of the home of Danny

O'Connor's brother, Brath said they believed the UDA was behind the attacks.

As the Mitchell Review of the Good Friday Agreement began, the Patten Report on the RUC was published. The Unionist response to Patten was as predictable as their obstruction of the Mitchell Review will be.

The main points of the Patten Report are:

- the name of the RUC changed to the Northern Ireland Police Service
- a change of the RUC's badge, an end to the flying of the Union Jack over police stations and the removal of the portraits of the Queen from police reception areas
- the setting up of a new police board with representation from political parties in the Assembly, giving Sinn Féin two seats on it
- a drive to increase Catholic representation in the new police force to 30% in ten years
- the merging of the notorious Special Branch with the CID, cutting the numbers of police from 13,000 to 7,500 and abolishing the full-time reserve while increasing the part-time reserve

The response of Unionism was to condemn the report. Trimble called it 'the shoddiest' he had seen in 30 years. John Taylor, Trimble's deputy in the Ulster Unionist Party, declared that he would now take no part in the Mitchell Review, leaving the UUP's delegation of which he was a leading member.

For Unionism, any modernisation of the RUC, any dilution of the symbol of the RUC as the defender of the 'Protestant people', is an attack on the existence of the 'Orange State' itself.

Predictably too, the SDLP welcomed the report, with Seamas Mallon calling on nationalists,

especially the young, to seek careers in the police.

Sinn Féin has consistently called for the disbanding of the RUC. Its official response was to say that the report needed more study and discussion. However, the comments made by Adams and McGuinness show that if the Mitchell Review makes progress, then Sinn Féin could be persuaded to accept the Patten Report. Adams was clear:

'The future of policing is inextricably linked with the fate of the Good Friday Agreement... it is clear that a new policing service, democratically accountable and reflecting the society which it seeks to police, is essential if the Agreement is to be implemented in full and political progress achieved.'

McGuinness added 'We want to establish whether or not what is being proposed is effectively the creation of a new police service... because if we create a new police service, then we have effectively disbanded the RUC.'

While Sinn Féin gave what amounts to a guarded welcome to the Patten Report, the reality is that it is nothing more than a cosmetic exercise with the political aim of reassuring the Catholic middle class that the sectarian excesses of the RUC will be curbed. For the nationalist working class nothing of any real significance will change. The 'Northern Ireland Police Service', just like the RUC, will have as its main role the defence of the northern Ireland state and will still have access to plastic bullets to do it.

The RUC displayed its normal brutal, sectarian face on 14 August when it forced Apprentice Boys marches through nationalist areas of Lurgan, Belfast and Derry. In Lurgan, peaceful protesters attempting to block the

road the parade was due to come down were attacked by the RUC. Eight plastic bullets were fired, injuring two protesters. In Belfast, the Parades Commission had ruled that the Apprentice Boys could parade down the Lower Ormeau Road. At 5.30am, 300 protesters were sitting in the road; the RUC, in full riot gear, saturated the area and began a brutal operation to clear the route. Protesters were punched, kicked and batoned in an attempt to break the protest. Eamonn O'Dochartaigh, a human rights observer, had his nose broken, his hands injured and his video camera smashed by RUC officers. Gerard Rice, an Ormeau residents' leader, said 'the police were brutal. It was the worst I've seen. I'm relieved no one in my community is dead.'

In Derry, 10,000 Apprentice Boys marched through the city. Nationalists were hemmed into the Bogside with the British army placing barricades over the gates leading through the city walls into the Bogside. The Parades Commission had given permission for the Apprentice Boys to march but had banned the Bogside Residents Association from marching into the city centre. The response of the youth to this occupation of Derry by the sectarian bigots of the Apprentice Boys, the RUC and British army was to defend their area with petrol bombs and bricks. This act of resistance was condemned by the MP for Derry, Martin McGuinness, on national television news that very night.

The 'Peace Process' has reached a dead end, but it has succeeded in neutralising the revolutionary trend in the Republican movement. It is the resistance of forces such as the youth of Derry that gives us hope for the future.

Bloody Sunday, murder inquiry



BOB SHEPHERD

The Saville Inquiry, the new inquiry into the murder of 14 unarmed civil rights demon-

strators on the streets of Derry by the Parachute Regiment in January 1972, has begun to collect 'new' evidence.

The 1972 Widgery Inquiry,

which whitewashed the role of the British army, ruled that all those shot had been firing or handling weapons. The so-called new evidence shows that none of those shot had in fact been handling weapons. Exactly what witnesses had said in 1972.

A new report to the Saville Inquiry by forensic scientists shows that one of the victims, Jim Wray, aged 22, was lying on the ground when he was shot twice. The report shows he was shot from a range of one metre. Barney McGuigan, aged 41, was shot through the back of the head with a dum-dum bullet. These fragments on impact and are illegal under the Geneva Convention.

Hugh Thomas, a senior Brit-

ish armed forces consultant surgeon, gave evidence on the deaths of John Young, Michael McDaid and William Nash. His evidence pointed to the fact that all three were killed by a sniper on the city walls. The bullets entered their bodies at 45 degrees and were, therefore, almost certainly fired from above.

Is it any wonder that members of the British army who fired shots that day have been granted anonymity during their evidence to the inquiry? While there is no doubt that the government would like to turn the Saville Inquiry into another whitewash like the Widgery Inquiry, uncomfortable truths continue to emerge.



Jack Straw

ellers, following up his notorious attack on 'winos, squeegee merchants and junkies' is part and parcel of this. His instruction to councils to start to use anti-social behaviour orders makes a mockery of any concept of human rights, as do his plans to lock up anyone branded a 'psychopath'. Straw's language is designed to whip up middle class hysteria so that any repressive measure, however arbitrary, can be speedily legitimised.

Defending the rich does not just include the arms multinationals even if they do get preferential treatment in the form of huge tax subsidies. Two years ago there was Bernie Ecclestone, Formula 1 and tobacco advertising. Now David Sainsbury can give £2 million to Labour - and goodness, what a surprise, his biotechnology company gets a £1 million grant. Gordon Brown has boasted of the lowest-ever corporation tax in

Crisis, crisis, crisis: the state of our schools

For three days running, from 14-16 September, *The Guardian* newspaper gave over front-page space and more inside to a special report by Nick Davies on the British schooling system. Nick Davies, 1998 British Reporter of the Year, specialises in writing on social issues and crime and recently published *Dark Heart: a journey into the hidden society of crime and poverty in the UK* which comes with a recommendation from Jack Straw as 'required reading... it will shock many to the quick that all this could be happening under their noses'. SUSAN DAVIDSON reviews Nick Davies' report.

What is happening in British schools is also happening under peoples' noses, in fact happening to millions of people, children, their parents, teachers and others. The shock is that the *Guardian* newspaper decided to give the articles so much space and the writer so much of a chance to tell it like it is.

The fatal flaw at the heart of our education system

Nick Davies concludes that the 'fatal flaw' responsible for failing schools is poverty. 'Every teacher knows it', he says and there was a time 'when every government minister admitted it'. The main thrust of his articles is to explain how the 'banal reality' that 'the single factor which more than any other determines a school's performance is its intake' has been covered up, ignored and denied. Nick Davies shows that poverty is officially rejected as an explanation of different educational performances. He also traces the battery of bureaucratic and ideological attacks on the school system that have actually made it more difficult to provide a decent schooling system for the poorest children. Indeed, it was exactly at the moment when child poverty was rising dramatically that legislation was introduced to make conditions at school worse for poor children. This confirms what we have consistently argued in this paper, that capitalism is unable to offer a decent education for all children and that, increasingly, quality education for middle-class children can only be achieved at the expense of working-class children.

Nick Davies interviews former Conservative Minister of Education Kenneth Baker, who worked closely with Mrs Thatcher to introduce the 1987 Education Act. This act would reverse a series of developments that had taken place during the postwar boom and expansion of education. By introducing the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools, he had two weapons with which to discipline teachers and local education authorities. Schools would have to conform to national standards or fail, and schools would have to 'market' themselves to gain funding because the money would go with the children. By these two means the national move towards comprehensive secondary schools was unwound. Today most are only 'comprehensive' in name. Schools with a 'balanced' intake of pupils are rare and secondary schools have been rapidly polarised into poor 'failing' schools and middle class or better-off 'successful' schools.

Under the cloak of 'parental choice', Thatcher/Baker set up city technical colleges (CTCs),

not because they were proven educationally sound but in order to create the illusion of a wider 'market' for the consumer (parents). The creation of extra attractive schools led to a downward spiral for schools in working class areas which were 'named and shamed' in published league tables of exam results. Middle-class parents chose more successful schools which grew ever richer in facilities and resources, thereby increasing academic performance even further.

Kenneth Baker tells Nick Davies that he and Thatcher knew perfectly well what would be the result of their education 'reforms' of the 1980s. He says 'I hoped it would lead to poorer schools literally having to close'. Baker and Thatcher deliberately set out to isolate schools in solidly poor working class areas, starve them of funds, shrink their numbers and create 'sink' schools. All blame would be put on 'progressive' inner-city teachers, the teaching unions, inadequate parents and lack of discipline. The only measure of a successful school would be academic results, and those who argued that school should offer more were dismissed as 'trendy'. The only explanation for educational failure would be the same: lazy parents, children and teachers. Poverty, inadequate resources, large classes, overworked teachers, English as a second language, poor transport, bad environment, overcrowded homes, lack of sports facilities, high unemployment among school leavers - all these were to be dismissed as 'excuses for failure'. It is this view that New Labour, under Education Minister David Blunkett, took on board lock, stock and barrel after the election that brought it to government after 18 years of Tory rule.

Readers will have noticed something significant missing from the Baker/Thatcher/Blair/Blunkett plan. If poor schools are to close, where will the children go? The answer of course is that most schools do not close and that the specially-created poor schools for children of the poor make up the 40% of secondary schools which are said by Ofsted to fall below the required standard.

The number of children living in poverty in Britain has trebled since 1979 to a point where a third of children - more than 4 million - now live below the poverty line. British levels of pupil failure are higher than in most of the rest of the developed world and levels of child poverty are also higher than in most of the rest of the developed world. According to official Treasury figures Britain has higher child poverty levels than even Greece or Portugal. The correlation between GCSE exam-

ination results and indices of poverty as measured by free meals etc is almost 100%. The poorer the child, the worse the results; the better off, the more successful. This is shown to have been proved by Nick Davies from research in Sheffield and many other sources have come to the same conclusion as regular readers of Education Notes in this newspaper will know. Yet 'Poverty is no excuse' is still the official line of the labour government.

It is the denial of the effects of poverty on the family and the institution of school that gives so much power to the Office of Inspection and to Chris Woodhead the Chief Inspector of Ofsted. Inspectors walk in and make judgements. They use notions of progress and attainment in a total vacuum. Eton School passes its Ofsted with a good report, Grim Street Secondary fails. No allowance is made for the 'single factor' which more than any other determines a school's performance - its intake. Nick Davies' articles show how this apparently empty and stupid inspection procedure - 'the weird world of bogus facts' - is a political strategy that has been designed to cover up the class-ridden nature of the state provision of schooling. The government has refused to fund a decent education system for all children. It adds to those children who are already economically advantaged by providing well-resourced schools, and denies necessary facilities to those disadvantaged children who are most in need. Poverty and working class hardship are ever more a feature of Britain, but despite talk of 'social exclusion' the Labour government is in denial about the effects of poverty on children. Like the Tories, the Labour Party is taking benefits from the poor, including decent schooling, and lavishing them on its middle-class voters. At least *Guardian* readers cannot pretend they do not know what a shabby deal has been made as payment for the ever-increasing educational attainments of middle-class children.

Attacks on teachers continue

Of the many teachers I have spoken to about the article, all say 'at last, someone is telling the truth about how it is'. Most of the massive correspondence that Nick Davies' articles have generated in the *Guardian* newspaper are in agreement with what he says. Many add that the situa-



tion is much worse than he portrays in failing schools. Most teachers add that they have been burdened with unnecessary and bureaucratic work which diverts their time and energies from actually teaching and helping the most disadvantaged children. Only a few, however, have conceded that teachers mostly agreed to adopt the new measures and were won over to view themselves with a new importance when the National Curriculum was introduced. That children are now tested at the ages of three, seven, 11, 14 and 16 years is only possible because teachers have accepted that it is the right thing to do. Those who now find themselves teaching in the poorest inner-city and deprived rural areas now regret bitterly that the comprehensive school has disappeared and they are left to impose a poor imitation of a middle class education on working class children.

There has been a lot of money in teaching in recent years. Special allowances of £2,000 have been on offer to teachers to implement all the new methods and teachers have aped being 'managers' and conformed to government and Ofsted initiatives willingly. As an inevitable result of this teachers now face the introduction of 'payment by results'. This will add divisiveness to an already divided workforce and see the introduction of a permanent, 'career' layer of teachers and cheaper contracted teachers. There will be a significant struggle this autumn over 'payment by results' in the teachers' unions. It can be seen as the last stage of the attack on the comprehensive school and could develop into an important fight against the New Labour government.

Susan Davidson

Spies, spies, spies everywhere

ROBERT CLOUGH

What are we to make of the increasingly far-fetched 'revelations' that have appeared on an almost daily basis in the press and on TV? First, the definition of a 'spy' is almost infinitely elastic. A lecturer is supposed to have told the East German Stasi who had employed his ex-students. He is now dubbed a 'traitor'. Another is supposed to have had conversations with Stasi officials about CND politics. In this ludicrously paranoid world, the former editor of the anti-Soviet *Tribune*, Richard Clements, is now claimed to have been... a Soviet informer. Then there is the spicy story of the 'Romeo' spy who seduced all nationalities of women bar any Brits. However he too is damned as a 'traitor'.

The files which contain all this information came from one Mitrokhin, an ex-KGB agent. How his archive arrived in this country in 1992 is, of course, a mystery, given the evident incompetence of both MI5 and MI6. Now it has been worked up into a book, with the *Sunday Times* serialising it in advance of publication. The *Sunday Times* once had to pay Michael Foot hundreds of thousands of pounds after claiming that he had been a KGB 'agent of influence'. Their 'source' was KGB defector Oleg Gordievsky. Gordievsky is also behind the allegations about Clements' 'double' life. The combination of commercial interest and ex-KGB material has put paid to mere facts.



Melita Norwood

The starting point for this feeding frenzy however did have foundations: Melita Norwood had indeed passed classified information to the former Soviet Union for over 40 years. Depending on what you are prepared to believe, this was either of insignificant value, or enabled the Soviet Union to develop the bomb three years before British imperialism did. It is also claimed that MI5 suspected Ms Norwood nearly 30 years before her spying career ended, but could do nothing about it. What is not in doubt is Ms Norwood's motive. In a simple and dignified statement she said 'I did what I did not to make money, but to help prevent the defeat of a new system, which had, at great cost, given ordinary people food and fares which they could afford, education and a health service. I thought perhaps what I had access to might be useful in helping Russia to keep abreast of Britain, America and Germany.' It transpires she turned down the offer of a KGB pension because she felt that others were

in more need of it, and told the world's press that 'in the same circumstance, I would do the same again'.

Into this world of claim and counter-claim step some very unsavoury characters. There have been the rabid Cold War veterans - Chapman Pincher, wheeled out by *The Observer*, and many others. There have also been those anxious to proclaim their loyalty to British imperialism. Gordon McLennan, one time leader of the Communist Party, told us that 'if we had found any members spying for the Soviet Union they would have been expelled for bringing the party into disrepute'. The old hypocrite didn't mind getting a huge subsidy from 'sales' of the CP paper *Morning Star* to the Soviet Union which enabled him and his ilk to sabotage every possible progressive movement going. Numerous former supporters of CND have laid into Vic Allen, labelling him an 'eccentric' for his defence of the Soviet Union. Their allegiance was to an organisation that refused to challenge British imperialism, and whose leaders overwhelmingly supported Labour even when it championed Trident and NATO.

Lastly, there has been David Shayler, who was given a whole column in *The Guardian* for a self-serving whinge. 'I'm hounded,' he said bravely from his French hideout, 'yet still goes free'. In his fantasy world, Melita Norwood's 'treachery' had 'put the lives of British people at risk and weakened our defences against a potential Soviet invasion'. 'Britain,' he pontificates, 'is a far from perfect democracy, but, in this century, it has never trampled on its people's rights and liberties in the same way that the politburo and the KGB did.' Such self-serving garbage ignores those who ended up paying for these liberties: the peoples of the British Empire, for instance; the people of Vietnam when British forces restored French rule in 1945; the black majority in South Africa when successive British governments (Labour and Tory) supported apartheid and opposed sanctions; the people of Indonesia and East Timor victims of British political interests as well as British-supplied weaponry. Shayler complains that 'instead of being allowed to tend roses in my back garden, have to battle to survive on a day-to-day basis', a whistle-blower 'hounded to the ends of the earth'. What a contrast Melita Norwood thought only of others when she did what she did. She did not run away when she was discovered. She stood her ground. That is courage David Shayler thinks only of himself. He ran away.

It leaves the question: why has all this blown up now? This we may never know. Given the extreme right-wing leanings of MI5 and MI6, it could be a crud plot to discredit Labour. On the other hand, it could have been an exercise to allow the secret services to overplay their hand and create conditions in which they could be brought under control. As the saying goes, you pays your money, you makes your choice.

Jack Straw stirs up prejudice

Labour's direction is becoming increasingly clear. While Blair wooes business and the bourgeoisie and makes grand appeals for a 'moral crusade', Jack Straw speaks to those sections of the middle and employed working class who perceive themselves to be 'normal'. He appeals directly to their worst prejudices, congratulating them on their decency, while locating any difference, deviation or eccentricity as so far beyond the pale it borders on criminality.

Straw's racist remarks about travellers in August and his denunciation of liberal lawyers in September are for the specific consumption of these sections. Straw sounded off against human rights solicitors and barristers for hampering the smooth implementation of the 'restraining orders' introduced under the Crime and Disorder Act. According to Straw, these middle class do-gooders don't have to live on estates terrorised by juvenile criminals, so should shut up. While it is certainly true that few liberal lawyers do live in such areas, nor do £89,000 a year Cabinet ministers, and this attack is simply a cover for the fact that the Crime and Disorder Act consists of a range of draconian measures, some of which involve entirely bypassing the courts, and effectively passing sentences without trial.

This diatribe against defend-

ers of civil liberties followed hard on the heels of the Home Secretary's West Midlands radio interview, in which he announced that there was too much 'sentimentality' about 'so-called travellers', most of whom are not 'real Romanies'. These fake gypsies 'seem to think that it's perfectly OK to cause mayhem in an area, to go burgling, thieving, breaking into vehicles, causing all kinds of trouble, including defecating in the doorways of firms'.

Straw's message was clear - travelling people are bad, evil and sub-human. Anyone who hates and despises them is only showing the ordinary decent citizen's intolerance of crime and squalor. There were strong echoes of his earlier comments on asylum-seekers (some of whom are themselves Roma travellers from eastern Europe). At every opportunity a division is made between those who 'decent people' may tolerate or pity, and those they should despise, and for whom no-one will weep should they be assaulted: there are 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum-seekers, 'real' and 'so-called' travellers, deserving and undeserving poor...

Earlier that week a fight between local people and asylum-seekers in Dover had received national publicity, when Kent Council used it as an opportunity to demand that refugees be



moved to other locations. The government was happy to acquiesce, as such 'voluntary' moves smoothly pave the way for the compulsory 'dispersal' measures in the Asylum and Immigration Act, which is due for its final House of Lords debate in October prior to being passed by the Commons in November. The dispersal measures are likely to be implemented immediately.

The press reported the controversy surrounding Straw's comments and that around events at Dover as though they had nothing to do with one another. Just as the institutional racism exposed by the Lawrence Inquiry was never linked to the institutional racism of the Asylum and Immigration Bill, which was published in the same week as the Inquiry report, no connection was made between Straw's

racist statements in the Midlands and the attacks on asylum-seekers in the south east.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 'the situation in Dover had been brewing for some time with local politicians and media consistently whipping up hostility towards asylum-seekers'.

The NCADC statement points out that, although the media has repeatedly inflated the figures, the actual number of asylum-seekers in Dover itself is around 600, with that in Dover district, which includes Sandwich and Deal, estimated as a little over 1,500. The total population of Dover is 38,000 and that of the district 103,000. The numbers of asylum-seekers are therefore comparatively small, however 'they have become an identified group subject to racism and

xenophobia because of the circumstances in which they live'.

Since the 1996 [Asylum and Immigration] Act took asylum seekers out of the benefit system they have been forced to rely on local authority accommodation and food vouchers in the town where they arrive. Dover council has earmarked a number of bed and breakfasts to the same part of town where asylum seekers are housed, penniless and jobless, while they wait for a decision on their asylum claims. This has created a virtual asylum seeker ghetto area of town, where small numbers can appear larger. The fact that these asylum seekers have no cash income and are barred from working means that they are totally socially isolated and excluded and have nothing to do but hang around all day further creating the circumstances that lead to racism and prejudice.

Create such a 'ghetto' in an area where industry has largely been destroyed and where there is high unemployment, and you have a recipe for potential conflict. When Straw denigrates travellers or 'bogus asylum-seekers' he is ensuring that such conflict will happen. The message he is sending to the white unemployed youth of Dover and others in their position is: turn your frustrations on these people, don't turn them on us. Blame the outsiders for your problems and your poverty. Don't blame us.

Nicki Jameson

Asylum seeker fights for life

Two Sikh asylum seekers from India were injured, one critically, trying to escape from the brutal conditions of Campsfield House detention centre on 20 September. One fell from a 20ft fence; he is now fighting for his life in the John Radcliffe infirmary in Oxford. He had applied for sanctuary in Britain and was terrified of persecution if he returned to India. The other sustained severe lacerations from the razor wire on top of the fence. Group 4 security guards told other detainees that the seriousness of the injuries would deter others from escaping. The Campaign to Close Campsfield says: 'This desperate escape attempt highlights the dangers and brutality of imprisoning asylum seekers. It is wrong to lock people up just for the "crime" of asking for sanctuary. Immigration detainees do not know why they are kept in prison, do not know how long for and do not know if they will be deported back to the horrors they fled, in these conditions people take desperate measures. The attitude of the guards is inhumane. Asylum seekers should not have to risk their lives for their liberty'. Write to Barbara Roche, Minister for Immigration and Nationality, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT or fax 0171 273 2043 demanding an end to the inhumanity of the detention of asylum seekers.

GM Foods - Labour comes a cropper

CATHERINE GOUGH

As a result of a Friends of the Earth (FoE) legal challenge, recently planted, genetically-modified (GM) crop trials in Lincolnshire and Hertfordshire have been exposed as illegal. Michael Meacher, Environment Minister, acknowledged the illegality as 'only a technicality' with 'no health, safety or environmental issues involved'. This is consistent with the government's gung-ho attitude to GM foods and the profits its agri-business bedfellows will reap if they are given the go-ahead for full-scale production. Meanwhile, however, across the globe the resistance to GM foods is mushrooming as consumers and growers are leading the way.

In September, the FoE legal action exposed the fact that AgriEvo UK Ltd had been allowed to substantially revise its plans for planting trial crops of oilseed rape, including quadrupling the area of land, doubling the length of the trial to 12 months and changing the time of planting from spring to autumn, without making a fresh application for permission to carry out the tests. Clearly AgriEvo viewed the permission it had from the Department of the Environment as the go-ahead to do whatever it wanted. Michael Meacher's response has confirmed this and his admis-

sion that these trials were illegal was carefully timed so that the crops had already been planted.

The trials are supposed to be carefully controlled and monitored. The truth is the opposite: there are very few checks on the trials; the safeguards to prevent cross-pollination and spread into the wider environment are minimal; and the legal sanctions, when the rules are breached, are pitiful. Nonetheless the government is promoting GM foods as safe in advance and its opponents are branded as Luddite - opposed on principle to scientific advance. Next year the crop trials will expand dramatically and, in the face of crop destruction by environmental activists, the government is considering keeping the trial sites secret.

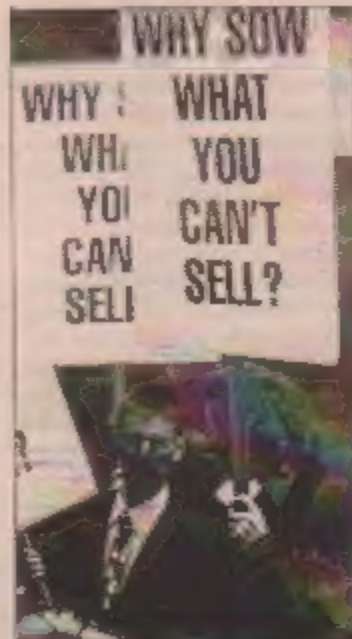
Prime Minister Tony Blair wants us all to keep 'an open mind' until the trials are over. Central to the government's arguments against GM opponents, and more specifically against the destruction of crops, is that the trials should go ahead in everyone's interests as they will resolve the question of whether GM foods are safe. This argument is fallacious. The trials will not answer the question of safety: there will be no account of cumulative or long-term effects; no account of interaction with other environmental factors; no account of widespread environmental impacts on wildlife, like birds for

example, which range beyond the test areas.

Science is less the arbiter of truth and virtue than the government would have us believe. It is just as much driven by the profit motive in capitalist society as any other area of human activity. Who pays the scientists and funds their research is a crucial question. The chemical multinationals, not least of all Monsanto, have been responsible for major hazards released into the environment - agent orange, dioxins, organophosphates, to name but a few - all declared safe for use and thoroughly tested at the time.

The test of safety for GM foods must be social as well as scientific. Above all, if it is a risk to tamper with foods in this way, what are the advantages and disadvantages? Much has been said about combatting hunger in the Third World, reducing pesticide and herbicide use and maximising yield, yet the answers to these problems already exist without genetic modification. Organically produced foods do not require pesticides and herbicides, and locally developed seeds and farm management alongside the removal of debt will be much more effective in combatting hunger across the world. These solutions, however, do not have the advantage of providing superprofits for the chemical and agri-business multinationals.

In response to this attempt to



corner the world market in food, a multi-billion dollar anti-trust action is being launched in 30 countries against agribusiness multinationals such as Monsanto, DuPont and Novartis. The action is being brought jointly by the Foundation on Economic Trends, National Family Farm Coalition, both in the USA, and individual farmers across Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America. The action is a response to the fact that these multinational corporations are cornering the market in seeds and crops, tying farmers to using particular herbicides and pesticides and policing seed production through terminator technology. At the moment, 80

per cent of Third World farmers rely on saving or exchanging their own seed. Ten companies already own 30 per cent of the \$23bn annual commercial seed trade, and five of them (Monsanto, Novartis, AstraZeneca, Aventis and Du Pont) control virtually all GM crops.

Across the world consumers and growers are rebelling against this attempt to monopolise food production for profit at the expense of local producers and the environment. In France a farmer, leader of the radical environmental group Confédération Paysanne, was gaoled for burning effigies of Ronald McDonald in the streets in protest against US sanctions on French foods following the EU ban on hormone-treated beef and for destroying a store of Novartis GM maize. When he was released on bail, crowds of supporters welcomed him outside the gaol. In Denmark a group called Green Guerrilla uprooted GM crops and in Germany 'crop squats' are being held on test sites. In Ireland, the 'Faery Army' destroyed a test site for Monsanto's RoundUp-Ready sugar beet in Cork and another group has begun a legal challenge to the trials. Even in the USA, the anti-Frankensteins food movement is growing. In Minnesota a group called 'Bolt Wevils' has destroyed Novartis research fields and glued the doors of the company's headquarters shut. They are targeting university campuses where Monsanto and Novartis are funding research. According to Time magazine 81 per cent of US citizens want GM food labelling and 60 per cent would not buy food labelled as containing GM ingredients. The

US's leading grain exporter has advised farmers to segregate GM crops from conventional ones in future, and the American Corn Growers' Association is advising its members to stop growing GM corn because of consumer concerns. The cost of segregating crops will be enormous and the costs will fall on individual farmers rather than the multinationals.

It is estimated that so far this year 50 field-scale trials and several farm scale trials have been wrecked by activists in the UK. Major food chains like McDonalds and Burger King have removed GM ingredients from their food and the supermarkets are squabbling about who was first to remove GM ingredients from their own-label foods. New labelling rules mean that catering establishments now have to advise customers if they are using GM ingredients - although not GM derivatives such as soya oil and lecithin.

Earlier this year Novartis axed 1,100 jobs following a drop in sales, and is set to downscale further in the face of a 25% drop in sales. AstraZeneca in Britain is considering selling its agri-chemical business and Monsanto's share price has fallen from \$62 to \$40 in the last year. Novartis's agribusiness chief Heinz Imhof has called for the setting up of a European equivalent to the US Food and Drug Agency (FDA) to reassure consumers that GM foods are safe. This would suit the multinationals down to the ground if they could ensure such an agency would act as its poodle in the same way as the FDA. In Britain, of course, they don't need to go that far - they have the Labour government. ■

Colombia

Poor organise to dethrone the rich

ALVARO MICHAELS

Ongoing agreements concocted this September by US Secretary of State Albright, her deputy Pickering and Colombian President Pastrana, together with Pastrana's appeal to the UN for aid (20 September 1998), show the depths of the crisis facing the Colombian ruling class. Over the last ten years, 1.2 million people have been displaced, over 35,000 killed and half a million have fled into exile as the war between rich and poor continues.

Colombia faces the worst economic 'recession' for 70 years: a shrinking GDP with 20 per cent (official) unemployment provoked a currency devaluation in June. The poorest 20 per cent (of a 38 million population) consumes only three per cent of the national income. Extensive violence, especially assassination, is used by the wealthy to terrorise opposition by the poor. But the poor have organised to dethrone the rich.

Already Colombia is the third largest recipient of US military aid. The October 1998 US budget tripled military assistance to \$300 million. Yet by July this year, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) were attacking army patrols in Bogotá itself, following assaults on police stations and army barracks across the country. This was possible despite air attacks on FARC positions by US-supported gunships and the use of 300-plus US 'advisors' by the regime.

The Colombian government

rushed to Washington to ask for an additional half a billion dollars a year for the next three years to fight the revolutionaries, and an emergency loan of \$3 billion was agreed with the IMF in July to keep the regime alive with a 'Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State'. The total 'defence' budget this year is \$1.2 billion! Historically, virtually all of Colombia's armed forces, soldiers, equipment, infrastructure, have been constructed

Colombia - an area of 30,000 square miles, the size of Switzerland. The ELN, the second largest revolutionary group has been excluded from the 'peace talks' - a clear indication of the Government's duplicity.

FARC has used the 'peace talks' to communicate its socialist programme for Colombia, including nationalisation of the chief branches of the economy, return of land to the workers, and dissolution of the existing military forces and police.



The aftermath of a FARC explosion at the army base in Medellín

with civil repression as the aim. After all, the cost of the war (5 per cent of GDP) is better for capitalism than the loss of the country altogether and the rich care nothing for the poor who are slaughtered in the process.

Pastrana, elected President in June 1998, has attempted to draw FARC into 'peace talks', which in the past have been used to de-rail revolutionary groups. This 'peace process' has been used to disguise the fact that military defeats inflicted by FARC are the reason for the withdrawal of state troops from five provinces in the south of

Meanwhile, Pastrana is privatising 20 banks - virtually the entire state banking system - due to massive losses (90% of the \$544 million lost by all banks) and the state has had to intervene to save some 30 private 'savings' banks from collapse as a result of the general economic crisis.

With guerrilla activity in over 50 per cent of the country's provinces, and a recent national strike in which FARC supported urban and rural workers by seizing a major power station demanding a 30 per cent reduction in prices, the government

knows it cannot possibly survive without US aid. During this most recent strike, centred on the poorest urban and rural districts, workers made 41 demands including international debt repudiation. Tear gas was used to counter street demonstrations and 200 workers were arrested.

So, 'oversight', the US has 'discovered' that Colombia is a huge source of narcotics and is using this as cover for its real aim of destroying the revolutionary movement. An increasingly successful revolutionary war in Colombia will extend into other countries in the region, such is the misery that imperialism inflicts throughout the continent.

US 'anti-drugs czar' General

McCaffrey has proposed \$600 million extra to the 'war against drugs'. He visited Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina and Peru in September to press for tighter border controls to strangle food and other supplies to Colombian revolutionaries, under the pretext of suppressing the drug trade. Brazil and, more enthusiastically, Peru, sent their police and troops as soon as US 'aid' was put on the table. Peru's President, Fujimori, has offered the use of 'intelligence services' used in its fight against Peruvian revolutionaries. This is happening despite the rejection of a US proposal, at the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States in June, to create a multinational intervention force to 'help' Colombia (9 June, *El Tiempo de Colombia*). Despite subsequent warnings from Presidents Castro (Cuba) and Chavez (Venezuela) against such an intervention, the US will not tolerate the rise of a genuine democratic revolutionary movement in Colombia and aims to stop it.

The first of three 1,000-strong

'anti drugs' battalions, now ready, will start operating in December with 33 US advisors. Annual exercises with Galaxy transports and US troops are held over the South Eastern provinces. The aim is not to deal with the right-wing terror groups that organise the production and refinement of heroin, and which slaughter whole villages where support for the revolutionaries is suspected. There will be no attack on the Colombian military whose leadership is thick with drug industry organisers, even though the US knows that the Colombian security forces underpin the drugs trade. The aim is to use the poverty of the rural villages and the resulting desperate growth of coca to avoid hunger, to destroy FARC and its support.

Neither the US nor the Colombian government aims to tackle rural misery, on the contrary cheap food from large farms imported into the countryside is destroying small local farming, as rural demonstrations during the September national strike show. Pesticides will rain down with utter disregard for the well-being of the rural workers. The real aim is to destroy the resistance of the people to the constant imperialist plunder of Colombia, carried out through a strategy of widespread violence and terror. In this context the statements by oil company Amoco/BP that it had not anticipated the wider violence in Colombia (*Financial Times* 21 September 1998) as it exploits the largest oil discovery there in 20 years, providing finance to right-wing guerrillas, police and vigilantes to protect its assets, is the most absurd hypocrisy imaginable.

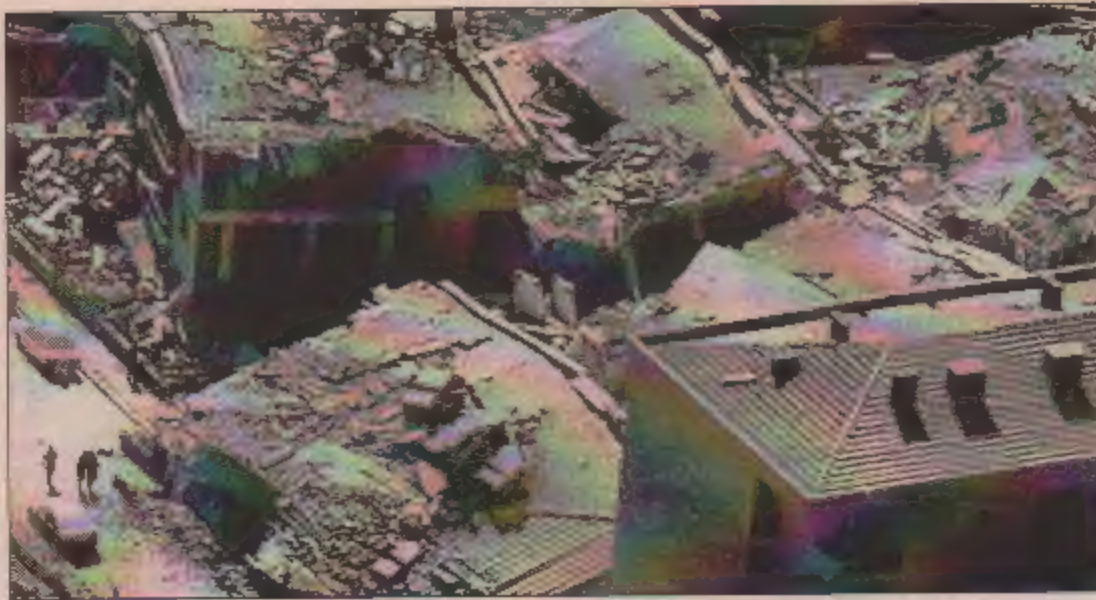
Imperialism out of Colombia!
Victory to the Poor and Oppressed!

Help Turkish workers and poor hit by shattering earthquake

On 17 August the most heavily populated part of western Turkey was hit by a massive earthquake. Thousands were buried in the rubble and many more lives were devastated.

In particular, it was the working class and the poor who were hit by the earthquake. The Turkish state has consistently ignored warnings from seismologists about the certainty that an earthquake would hit the area - it was not 'if' but 'when'. In consequence corrupt planning laws allowed construction companies, many run by politicians, to throw up shoddy high rise blocks in areas most at risk. Turkey has the highest proportion of earthquake risk zones in the world: 92% of the country is at risk. The 500-mile north Anatolian fault line runs east to west across Turkey and produces an earthquake stronger than 6.7 on the Richter scale on average every six years. 1,000 people died in the Avcilar district of Istanbul mainly because their blocks of flats were built on sandy soil which liquefies in an earthquake. Shoddy, below-standard building materials ensured that blocks collapsed and many were killed.

In the aftermath of the earthquake the survivors were left to dig in the rubble for their rela-



tives and friends with their bare hands. There was no rescue plan to deal with the situation, no help and no equipment. Survivors in Golcuk, which was flattened by the quake, complained that relief was directed only to the nearby naval base where 200 had died.

The Turkish army, 'defender of the Turkish people', did not defend them. Trained by NATO to kill Kurds and occupy northern Cyprus, equipped with tanks and helicopters, they were without picks, shovels, sniffer dogs and earth moving

equipment. Within hours of the earthquake, as rescuers pleaded for help, Chief of Staff General Huseyin Kirioglu was showing a visiting US General the tomb of Mustafa Attaturk in Ankara (Robert Fisk, *The Independent*, 23 August).

Subsequent utterings from the government have failed to reassure the victims that the relief and aid offered internationally will reach them rather than the layers of corrupt officials. In consequence the Turkish left has united to make an international appeal for aid to be

directed to them so that working class people and the poor will be helped. One cargo of aid has already been sent and the appeal hopes to send another soon. They need money, of course, but also baby food, nappies, sanitary towels, basic medicines, cleaning materials and, most importantly, tents.

Material aid (not clothes) can be delivered or sent to Day-Mer, Former Library, Howard Road, London N16 8PR. Tel: 0171 275 8440. Donations can be paid into Barclays Bank Account 'Earthquake Relief Fund for Turkey' No 70989168, sort code 20-46-57.

Urgent campaign Defend Iranian students

Four Iranian students have been sentenced to death by the Islamic regime. They are amongst the hundreds arrested during July's pro-democracy demonstrations in Tehran; many others have been given lengthy prison sentences and there are fears for those still awaiting trial. A campaign to defend the Iranian students has been formed by the Coordinating Committee of Workers' Left Unity and the editorial board of *Iran Bulletin*, with the support of many journalists, trade unionists, academics and activists worldwide. They call for all sentences against those arrested to be declared null and void and for their immediate and unconditional release, condemn the terror unleashed against political activists in Iran by the security forces and strongly support the students' demands for freedom of thought, expression and organisation. They warn too of impending massacres of political activists by the security forces.

For more information contact the International Campaign in Defence of Iranian Students at BM Iran Bulletin, London WC1N 3XX, e-mail 101543.707@compuserve.com

The Revolutionary Communist Group fights for a society which produces for people's needs, not profit - that is, a socialist society.

Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling capitalist class, for profit. Internationally, imperialism divides the world into oppressed and oppressor nations; the majority lives in poverty, while a tiny minority squanders unprecedented wealth. By restricting production worldwide to the narrow limits of profit-making, the basic needs of the majority of humanity cannot be fulfilled.

► In Britain today more than four million are unemployed with many people - women in particular - trapped in low wage, part-time jobs. 25% of the population - the majority women and children - lives in poverty, with lower wages, lower benefits and fewer social services. Meanwhile, money-grabbers in the newly-privatised industries (like the water authorities) and banks amass more profits and pay their directors inflated salaries. The RCG supports the struggle of the working class to defend and improve its living standards.

► Racist attacks are on the increase. The police do nothing to defend black people against attack, and instead blame black people for crime. At the same time, Britain's racist immigration laws are used to harass, detain and deport black people. The RCG fights against racism and fascism in all its forms. We support the right of black people to organise and defend themselves against racist attack. We oppose all immigration laws.

► While the working class bears the brunt of the crisis, new laws like the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and anti-trade union legislation have been introduced to criminalise the right to protest. The RCG opposes all anti-working class laws and fights to defend democratic rights the right to organise and protest.

► Britain is an imperialist country. Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and the national working class of the Six Counties are subject to military occupation and brutal repression. The RCG supports the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination and calls for the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

► Internationally, oppressed nations are driven into poverty and debt by imperialism as multinational corporations superprofits from the labour of the poor. Throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and eastern Europe the effects of the free market are obvious - low wages, appalling working conditions, poverty and starvation for the mass of the people; environmental degradation, corruption and repression in government. The RCG supports the struggle of all oppressed people against imperialism.

► The RCG supports socialist Cuba and condemns the illegal US blockade. We fight actively in defence of the Cuban revolution.

► In the drive for profits, the needs of human beings and the environment are secondary to the profits of multinational corporations. The RCG supports the struggle to defend the environment.

► The Labour Party is a ruling class party which defends capitalism. It has never defended the interests of the working class. The RCG fights for the independence of the whole working class. We do not support any of the pro-capitalist parties in elections.

► The RCG fights against prejudice and bigotry, which are used by the ruling class to divide and weaken the working class. We oppose all discrimination against black people, women, lesbians, gay men and people with disabilities.

The defence of the working class and oppressed can only come from the working class organising democratically and independently in its own interests, in Britain and internationally. The Revolutionary Communist Group stands for the rebirth of socialist movement internationally to destroy capitalism and imperialism and replace them with a socialist society, organised to defend the interests of the working class and oppressed. Join us.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!
BCM Box 5905, London WC1N 3XX
Telephone: 0171 837 1628. Website: <http://www.rcgfrl.easynet.co.uk>

What price

The terrorist's tale

Jacqueline Kaye was organiser of the Prisoners Aid Committee (PAC) which campaigned for IRA prisoners between 1972 and 1982. Fouzi Slihi is a researcher on Middle East affairs. They are currently researching the peace processes in Ireland and Palestine.

'As long as Ireland is divided, violent republicanism will be an un-eradicated tradition.'

Bishop and Mallie,
The Provisional IRA

The current phase of the armed struggle for a united Ireland appears to be over. In the last 30 years of bloody conflict, 3,000 people have been killed, thousands more injured and millions of pounds worth of property destroyed. As someone who gave wholehearted support to that struggle I must now, like hundreds of others, pause to take stock of what we have done. This tidal wave of violence has withdrawn leaving us stranded on the beach of conventional politics. Although I am an English woman and therefore hardly a stereotypical IRA supporter, I believe this turning point is one I share with those whose experiences have paralleled mine.

I entered politics through the radicalism of the sixties and seventies. To paraphrase Melville: 'Vietnam and Cuba were my Oxford and Cambridge'. A generation born to the first extended period of peace this century, we were destined to make our own wars. I spent two years in Cuba in the early seventies: an exhilarating time of Third World solidarity and the anti-imperialist struggle. It was also the period of wars of national liberation when time after time, what had not been ceded on the field of battle was lost around the negotiating table. Those who resisted were assassinated: Lumumba, Allende, Machel. These wars of liberation gradually modulated into what I think of as the seminal image of our age: US marines landing on the shores of other people's countries to restore order. Only the armed revolution of Cuba has survived and by active intervention changed the map of the post-colonial world.

In Cuba I learned that violence was needed to destroy the violence of the capitalist system and that the violence of unjust economies underpinned a world order where the majority suffered for the benefit of the minority. On return to England, I entered the world of Irish Republicanism via the British prison system. An Irishman I had met in Cuba on a work camp, Eamonn Smullen, had been framed on an arms charge. As I began to visit him and others, I was inducted into the unwritten world of illegality. The terrifying apparatus of the British top security prison, high walls, secure units and electronic surveillance was physically intimidating, but the visits themselves were psychologically liberating. I had entered an oral tradition where learning comes not from silently eyeing the page, but from the lips of those who have lived it. The history of Irish Republicanism was one of hundreds of years of violent resistance to British colonialism and refusal to bow down to the hegemony of the British state. My theoretical ideas took on the form of flesh and blood: these people had not studied

Marx or Gramsci. Instead, they had lived them out in their lives.

After Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, I tried to join the Official IRA, who had exploded a retaliatory bomb at the HQ of the Parachute Regiment at Aldershot. The Officials, more left-leaning than the Provisionals from whom they had split in 1971, asked me to set up a prisoner organisation, initially to campaign for the three men arrested after Aldershot. This organisation, the Prisoners Aid Committee, was funded by them and the other members similarly hand-picked; it was a secretive and undemocratic organisation, mirroring its origins. We were effectively to allow the undoubtedly illegal to speak through us. For about 13 years, this campaign remained in existence as a campaign of solidarity with IRA prisoners. Expelled from the Officials in 1974, I escaped assassination (their traditional way of dealing with dissent) and took the PAC into a limbo from where we campaigned for all prisoners, but without being accountable to anyone but ourselves.

The Aldershot bomb had not killed soldiers, but civilians: five women cleaners, a gardener, and a chaplain. I became a friend of Noel Jenkinson, given 30 years for the bombing, and took possession of the police photos of the dead, pictures you will never see on your television screen or in your newspapers. These were my fellow human beings, my fellow citizens, rendered into horrifying lumps of meat. But I put the photos away and carried on.

The IRA's justification for killing went way back beyond the British state's onslaught in Derry, on Bloody Sunday. It went back to the Defenders of the 18th and 19th centuries, who resisted attempts to eradicate the Catholic peasantry. Its ideological origin was the United Irishman Rising of 1798 and its adoption of the idea of the citizen modelled on the French Revolution. Republicanism posits the free and equal citizen as a liberation from the monarchical subject, but its main tenet is the illegitimacy of the British presence in Ireland, against which all methods are justified. Reaching back to the last all-Ireland vote of 1918, when a majority voted for an independent Ireland, the IRA claimed a legitimate authority which pre-dated the creation of 'Ulster' in 1922. Manifestly, the British in 70 years had been unable to persuade the nationalist population trapped within the Six Counties that they were indeed British. A gerrymandering and oppressive oligarchy, now all but forgotten, swept away by violent rebellion, ruled over a freedom of almost medieval despotism.

As an outsider, I saw injustice piled upon injustice over hundreds of years of British colonial rule manifested in the violent reaction of the oppressed. The logic of violence, a seminal 1970s belief, was that the violence of the oppressed was a necessary process. British subjects were not 'innocent bystanders' at all, but

complicit by remaining silent in the face of the brutality of their own government. Deaths in England exposed the racism of the British State, which was prepared to countenance destruction in Ireland, what William Whitelaw once called 'an acceptable level of violence', but could not tolerate deaths in Britain.

To be effective, the war had to be brought to England; the PAC existed to boost the morale of those caught and, we hoped, encourage those who had not yet been caught. The war in Britain, the city centre bombs, attacks on military and ruling class targets, spectacular intelligence coups like Downing Street, Brighton, Heathrow, Bishopsgate and bombs like Birmingham, which was the highest civilian casualty bombing since the Second World War - this is what has driven the British to compel their Unionist allies to come to the negotiating table. If the Vietnamese could have bombed New

'There was a fight and I picked a side, not the side I thought would win, but the one I thought was right.'

York, or the Algerians Paris, would they have been wrong to do so? Taking the war to the enemy has always seemed to me a better tactic than destroying your own environment. But the lack of any popular network of support inevitably meant that those sent to England would be much more likely to get caught.

As I went into prison after prison, the issue of justification never arose. These men and women, facing the kind of massive prison sentences never given to ordinary criminals, could not allow doubts to enter their minds. And I did not allow them into mine, either. Think, for a moment, of an ordinary domestic murderer who will endlessly rehearse his crime, explain, apologise. How different is the imprisoned guerrilla? The vindictiveness of the judicial system actually mirrored back the IRA's view of themselves as not criminal. Within the prison system, something was created, openly referred to as 'Special Irish Category', which marked them out as different from other prisoners. There was a war, people got killed. But they also took responsibility: they 'claimed' their bombs and they were volunteers. What they had done, they had done of their own free will. No state had killed on their behalf. How many British people feel responsibility for the deaths in Iraq or Kosovo? They have ceded this responsibility but the guerrilla fighter takes it back. The IRA took up arms in response to the internal force of conscience. And they were also willing to die, and die they did: blown up by their own

bombs, shot dead, dying of self-induced starvation, found dead in their cells.

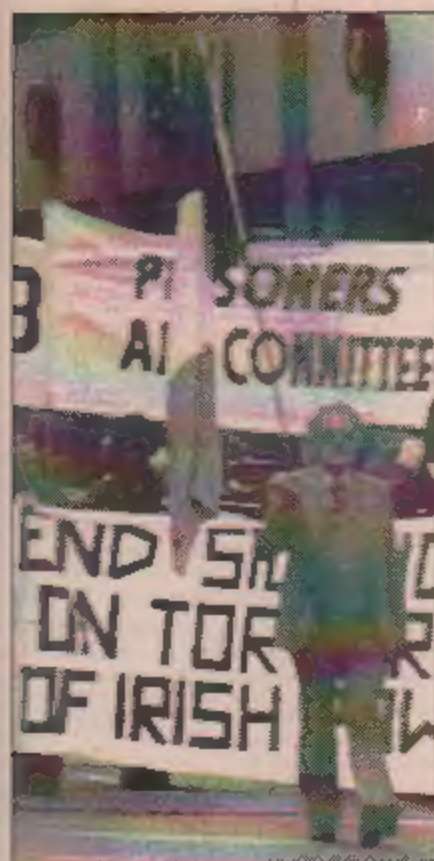
I too was a volunteer. I too followed the internal force of conscience, a force so strong that I could look at those bits of meat and still sleep at night.

Of course the IRA had little or no support among the left in Britain. Those who had appeared to be clear about the issues in Vietnam became confused about Ireland, which they surrounded with enough 'ifs' and 'buts' to have built a new country. This failure, with one or two honourable exceptions, predicted the later catastrophic failure to support the miners and led directly to the triumph of neo-liberalism. Truly a nation which enslaves another, forges its own chains. It was their loss, for as it turned out, we did not need them. The campaign I ran was supported and funded by the Irish in Britain. Those on the British left who remained silent or were pusillanimous in their support simply failed to live in the historical moment which was theirs. Their silence is reflected in the academy where Ireland is always excluded from the fashionable discourse of post-colonialism.

For me personally the result is that I have survived intellectual and political isolation from my own generation, whose lives seemed set fair to coalesce with mine in the exhilarating days of the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps I did not realise that these slogans of international solidarity were not meant to be taken literally.

And so instead my friendships have been forged across visiting room tables and behind prison walls. The IRA prisoners I came to know altered my image of myself. In January of 1977, I was able to help the men captured at Balcombe Street during their Old Bailey trial. We had some success in exposing the frame-up over Guildford and Woolwich and a great deal of police chicanery. So much success that in fact the jury unexpectedly acquitted them on a number of charges. Yet after the brief euphoria wore off, I found myself watching the vans taking them off to start their 30 year sentences with a sickening feeling of dread. What could I really know of what they were feeling? I have known them now for 23 years and I still cannot answer that question. A prisoner's closest bond is always going to be with another prisoner. At the end of the day, I am an outsider.

The political awakening in which I came of age was the evident fact of the use of violence to underpin the capitalist system. Once felt, this could never be un-felt, it entered into the nerve endings, the reflexes and synapses of living. One could never again not know that the human had been reduced to the bookkeeping mentality of profit and loss. My analysis of the Irish war inserted it into a universal, historical context: a theoretical framework for the war's localism. But at the end of the day, it



peace?

'Peace' at the service of colonisation

became overwhelmingly personal. In 1972 on my first visit to Noel Jenkinson, another visitor mistaking me for his wife, asked: 'How long is he doing?' 'Thirty years', I replied. 'Let me tell you, you won't be coming in here in thirty years', she said. Technically, she was right, for 27 years later, most of the prisoners have been or will be released. Yet for the whole of my adult life, I have been going in.

When the bomb went off in the centre of Omagh in August of 1998, my reaction was not: 'How could they do it?' For I know how they could. The people who planned Omagh were the very same people who had sacrificed everything in the struggle for a United Ireland. The decision to bring about and continue a ceasefire did not imply a turning away from the military struggle, but merely a decision to allow some room to manoeuvre to the politicians, taken by people who, like me, profoundly mistrust politics. The IRA is not a democratic organisation, nor will it bend to the popular will. Terrorism is fundamentally incompatible with 'democracy'. You don't go to bed one night committed to the violent overthrow of the state and get up next day a representative of the people.

Those who caused the carnage at Omagh were keeping faith with the dead. These are people with no hope of public office, no Assembly seats. When Bobby Sands' sister said: 'We weren't fighting for peace, we were fighting for independence', in my heart, in spite of the carnage, I agreed with her.

Yet Omagh may be the end, as Aldershot was the beginning. I know there are hundreds like me who feel that the deal sticks in their throats like a fish bone. Yet I think we shall have to swallow. This war has already lasted 30 years, a whole generation. The personal devastation it has brought among those who took up arms has been immense. And we do not have a United Ireland. The comradeship we forged under extreme pressure may shatter in conditions of mundane existence. Then we shall truly have got nothing out of it.

There was a fight and I picked a side, not the side I thought would win, but the one I thought was right. 'We shall fight in the libraries', one of the Berlin revolutionaries said to me in Cuba in 1968. Well, comrade, I did not fight in the libraries, but in the streets and as a result, there's blood on my hands. In that fight, I transcended nation, class and gender. It's not an experience I can walk away from.

Now, however, there may be a new kind of political reality. Perhaps those who remember the past are in the best position to let it go. That old reality may fade yet and become a phantom. Let it live a moment longer and cast its shadow across us: it burns with the flame of that most human of instincts, the rage for justice.

Jacqueline Kaye

'If the hour of liberation is far away, this doesn't mean it is now the hour of surrender.'

George Hadad (Jordanian writer)

Over the last decade, the Palestinian resistance has entered negotiations with Israel to find a settlement for over 50 years of conflict. Historically speaking, it is unprecedented that the victims of colonisation, undefeated after an intense phase of military confrontation, reach out to their colonisers and agree to find a solution through peaceful means. The significance of this act, however, has been wilfully understated by Israel and its allies, and its weaknesses have been unfairly exploited. The negotiations have emerged as a step-by-step strategy aimed at achieving, via the negotiating table, the defeat of the liberation movement. The reconstruction of the colonial/apartheid situation seems to be the obvious end result of this process.

It is ironic that the losses of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), in terms of the further dispossession of the Palestinians following the five-year-long Oslo peace process, are far more devastating than the losses suffered over 30 years of armed struggle. The consequences for the Palestinians, whether in Israel, the Occupied Territories or in the diaspora, are dire. The PLO has been transfigured into an integral part of Israeli colonisation.

Meanwhile, Israel has strengthened its hold over the area by ceding broken bits and pieces of land constituting - if the Israelis honour the agreement - 18 per cent of the West Bank (itself only 22 per cent of Palestine). In the remainder of the West Bank, Israel continues its programme of mass land expropriation through the demolition of Palestinian houses, forced movement of the population and settlement building. Between the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 and March 1998, 829 Palestinian homes were demolished by Israeli bulldozers (535 in the West Bank and 94 in Jerusalem). Of these, 268 were destroyed by the Labour government and the remainder by the Likud. By the end of 1998, more than 1,800 demolition orders remained to be carried out, threatening to evict more than 10,000 people onto the street.* For those clinging to the fantasy that the Israeli Labour Party is more inclined to make peace than Likud, these numbers, as well as its stalling over land redeployment and its discourse of threats and ultimatums, speak volumes.

It is worth remembering that in 1948 Jewish land in Palestine did not exceed 7 per cent. After 1948, the destruction of 531 towns and villages, the forced displacement and dispossession of 800,000 Palestinians, and numerous massacres (33 documented and established as fact so far), the Zionists took all Palestine except the West Bank and Gaza Strip. After 1967, they conquered the rest of

historic Palestine. The 'peace process' pertains only to the land colonised after 1967.

Mass land expropriation and demolition of homes are not the only manoeuvres that survived the peace agreement and its amendments (the Oslo agreement, the Wye River agreement, the Wye 2 agreement). Israel continues to expropriate the West Bank water supply so that fundamentalist settlers may water their gardens and fill their swimming pools, while water shortages remain a daily crisis in nearby Palestinian villages. Palestinian political prisoners are still held, in breach of the Oslo agreement, in Israeli prisons. The recent release of 350 prisoners does not account for even a quarter of the total, estimated at over 1,500. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are still surrounded by fundamentalist settlers who answer to no law, not even Israel's, who shoot, kill and harass at will. A few weeks ago,

Oslo agreement does not even mention them and Israel, five years after Oslo, still ignores them.

The Oslo agreement and the Wye memoranda have proved to be coldly calculating colonial manoeuvres designed to eradicate Palestinian resistance through an implacable manipulation of the Palestinian nation's half century of wandering, oppression and misery, and their desperate hopes for justice. Israel, through Oslo, has been sapping the Palestinians' will with the aim of eradicating their ability to resist for generations to come.

The PLO's grave error was that it believed Israeli protestations about peace, and trusted the USA as power broker and impartial judge. The moment they surrendered their military option, the PLO no longer had bargaining power. No coloniser has ever given the colonised their rights out of a sense of justice; they have been forced to surrender them.



an Israeli court acquitted a settler who had beaten a 10-year-old Palestinian boy to death. The one million Palestinians who are citizens of Israel (20% of the population) remain second class citizens. Israel is a 'state for the Jews' - not for its citizens; its Palestinian citizens have neither the right to lease, sell nor buy land, and their language, culture and heritage are still forbidden to them.

In spite of the peace charade, this remains the situation for Palestinians. It is in stark contrast to the fair and humane treatment Jewish minorities used to receive, and still do, in Muslim countries during the centuries of European anti-Semitism. Outside of Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories, there are seven million Palestinian refugees scattered around the world, most of them stateless and living in refugee camps in the most appalling conditions. The

Yassar Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, had no contingency plan if Israel and the USA proved untrustworthy - which was the case. He walked headlong into the trap of the 'peace process', the red carpets, the White House receptions, the high media coverage. Soon, he began suppressing dissent within his movement, which was slowly transformed into a private militia responsible for the security of Israel.

Arafat began to close down schools, charities, newspapers and television channels. He banned books, beginning with those of the most respected Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said. Summary arrest of Israeli/CIA-designated Palestinians, imprisonment without trial and assassination of Hamas militants are now the main functions of the Palestinian Authority, the name given to the PLO after Oslo. Arafat is now

dependent on Israel's (paucity of) charity and the USA's (apparent non-existent) guilt. Israel hasn't even recognised the right of the Palestinians to self-determination.

The Oslo agreement and memoranda have successfully lured Arafat into a betrayal of his own people. Following in the footsteps of corrupt Arab regimes, and without consultation with the concerned Palestinian institutions (the most efficient and energetic institutions in the Arab world), he accepted the USA's dictate on the Arabs: to rule your own people with iron and fire, to accept Israel's total impunity and to wait for occasional charity. Arafat's gunners are spearheading Israel's daily oppression of the Palestinians and supplanting the Israelis in eradicating any signs of resistance.

In the context of the Palestinian quest for justice and self-determination, however, the fate of Arafat remains that of a tragic figure who broke under the stressful responsibility of leading his nation to freedom. The damage is considerable, but repairable.

'A peace imposed by force will last only as long as that force is still there', commented the London-based monthly *Palestine Times*. As far as the majority of Palestinians is concerned, it is clear that Israel has failed to confront its historic responsibility and the criminal dispossession and half century of misery and hardship that lie at its foundations. They are convinced more than ever, that Israel has opted for denial as a long-term policy. From a Palestinian as well as an Arab/Muslim perspective, Israel is simply gambling on breaking the Palestinians' will and shattering their aspirations while they are weak. Its vision includes only those who are desperate enough to be grateful for the crumbs from its table. Unfortunately for Israel, that leaves only Arafat and his cronies interested. And if the corrupt Arab regimes have been queuing up to betray Palestine to be in the USA's good books, there nevertheless remain five billion Muslims and large number of Westerners with a sense of integrity, including Jews and Israeli people, who will not cease demanding justice.

In the midst of the media hype and euphoria that accompanies the peace theatrics, the Palestinians should not lose faith in the justness of the cause. The lessons need to be drawn and this farce of treachery and unnecessary capitulation needs to be put aside. If this is not the hour of liberation then it is definitely not the hour of surrender.

As I write the last words of this report, the BBC has just announced two massive explosions in the north of Israel. The news did not come as great surprise to me. Anybody could have predicted that, including the Israelis. A 'security agreement' does not pass unnoticed as a 'peace agreement'.

Fouri S...

* See *Palestine Report*, 15 July 1998

East Timor a fire fuelled

As we go to press the UN peacekeeping force has belatedly entered East Timor, ostensibly to uphold the outcome of the referendum in August - independence. In reality their presence will protect the vast interests of imperialism in the region. The Interfet force, as it is known, will eventually reach 7,500 and, although the Indonesian army has agreed to withdraw, 4,500 Indonesian troops will remain 'by agreement'. Militia activity continues. How much independence the East Timorese people will be allowed is an open question.

In Indonesia the popular movement led by students, which last year ousted President Suharto, is flexing its muscles. In late September, riots in Jakarta forced the regime to back down on proposals to increase emergency powers for the military. In both Indonesia and East Timor, the struggle will continue.

Labour's bloody hands

Tony Blair, Robin Cook, George Robertson are all accomplices to the massacre of thousands of East Timorese. Alongside them in the dock should be other bit players: Baroness Symons, Ken Jackson, Kim Howells. Each in their own way has aided and abetted the butchers of Jakarta. Their capacity for hypocrisy and lying has been limitless. They have supported the sale of arms to one of the bloodiest regimes of the century. Now that they have been discovered, they weep crocodile tears and urge support for the UN intervention. But if the Jakarta politicians and generals are war criminals (which they are), what are those who sold them the tools of their trade?

When Labour came into government in 1997, it refused to stop sales of British Aerospace Hawk aircraft, claiming it would be a breach of contract. It also refused to hold up deals for the supply of Scorpion light tanks: 55 of them. There were also outstanding deliveries of other armoured vehicles: Saladin and Saracen and 55 Ferret armoured cars. Over a two-year period, the government allowed 124 licences for the export of arms and military systems, rejecting only six out of 57 applications in its first year.

International arms trader Samuel Cummings, who understands the politics of the arms industry very well, said: 'All weapons are defensive, and all spare parts are non-lethal.' This has been Labour's mantra: every weapon it has sold the butchers has been for 'self-defence'. So let us remind ourselves of Labour's gallery of butchers' assistants:

Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary. In 1994, he attacked the Tories for selling Hawk aircraft, saying that they had been 'observed on bombing runs in East Timor in most years since 1984'. By October 1997, however, the Foreign Office 'were confident' Hawks were not being used in East Timor. George Robertson, Minister of Defence. He lobbied hardest to maintain arms sales to Indonesia. When Cook refused an Indonesian army order for sniper rifles, Robertson attacked him for offending General Prabowo Subanto, head of the Kopassus death squads. Robertson described Prabowo as an 'enlightened leader, keen (on) human rights'. When he attended the 1999 Defence Systems and Equipment International arms fair on 10 September, Robertson had plenty to say on Kosovo, but nothing about East Timor. The MoD argued that despite the bloodbath in East Timor, invitations to Indonesian army leaders should stand.

Baroness Symons, Minister of State for defence procurements. On 22 April 1999, she told the House of Lords that 'The government does not have any evidence that any equipment licenced for export by this government has been used in East Timor' and that 'we see no justification for a general arms embargo on Indonesia. It has legitimate defence requirements'. On 31 August, the day after the Jakarta-sponsored militias went on the rampage, she repeated this on Radio 4, adding that Indonesian leaders 'have a right' to attend the DSEI arms fair.

Derek Fatchett, late Foreign Office minister. On 14 December 1998, he admitted that 'we have received reports that some of the military equipment deployed by the Indonesian armed forces during the civil unrest on 13 and 14 November was UK-supplied.' This included water cannon and armoured vehicles. Saladins and Saracens were also being used in East Timor. However, in January 1999, Fatchett repeated the claim that 'the legal advice that we have is that we have no power to revoke the licences'.

Stephen Byers, trade minister. In July, he pushed the Export Credit Guarantees Department to underwrite a loan for the export of two transmission towers to central Java 'in view of the importance we attach to our relations with Indonesia'.

Kim Howells, another minister of trade who earned his governmental position by betraying the miners' strike. On 16 September, he refused to disclose the numbers of Ferret, Saracen and Saladin armoured vehicles the Indonesian government had ordered, on grounds of, yes, commercial confidentiality.

Tony Lloyd, former Foreign Office minister. In June this year he attacked John Pilger, saying that '[his] diatribe against this government's policy on Indonesia ignores the facts. The government has not licenced repressive equipment to Indonesia.' This was one month before Hawks were again in action over East Timor.

Ken Jackson, leader of the AEU. He lobbied the Labour government hard to permit the sales of Hawk aircraft. This is no doubt an example of 'partnership' where trade union leaders do the bidding of the arms manufacturers.

Above all, there is Tony Blair. As he tells us of the need for a new 'moral purpose', we should remember his record. He supported Robertson over the sale of sniper rifles. When Cook realised that it was impossible to continue arms sales to Indonesia, it was Blair who refused to back down. In the end, the ban on arms sales was announced on 11 September, 48 hours after that by the US. Right to the end, Cabinet sources were saying that there should be no change to the policy.

The entire Labour government is tied to the bloody Jakarta regime hook, line and sinker. There are no 'non-lethal' weapons, no 'non-lethal' spare parts. Any weapon can be used for internal repression. Geoff Hoon, now a Foreign Office minister, acknowledged that 'no formal mechanisms exist at present for systematically monitoring the use of British weaponry once it has been exported'. Hence the claims that such arms exports were not being used in East Timor were just bare-faced lies.

Once more FRFI has been justified in its refusal to support Labour. The rest of the left who urged us to vote Labour two years ago has been wringing its hands again. Socialist Worker and the rest of them condemn 'New Labour' as if Old Labour were any different. When will they have the guts to condemn Labour as a whole, and break with its rotten, racist and imperialist traditions?

Robert Clough

On 30 August, after 23 years of bloody repression by Indonesia, 98.6 per cent of the people of East Timor turned out to vote in a UN-sponsored referendum. Despite intimidation by Indonesian-backed militia, the result was a massive vote for independence and freedom and against limited autonomy under Indonesian rule. Within two weeks, East Timor had been destroyed, its cities reduced to smoking shells, hundreds of East Timorese murdered and almost the entire population driven from their homes. Only then did the United Nations send in peace-keeping troops. One of the first acts of the their commander, Major-General Peter Cosgrove, was to shake hands with the Indonesian military - who actively participated in the carnage - and praise them for their 'first-class assistance'. But a willingness to ignore Indonesian crimes, however heinous, has always been the hallmark of the west's attitude to East Timor.

Imperialism's shameful role

Today, East Timor's 'descent into violence' is headline news, a tale of a brutal militia, an impotent Indonesian army and a 'fragile Indonesian democracy' that must not be offended. Enter the good guys, the UN peacekeeping forces. That is the myth. The truth is that for 23 years the imperialist countries, in particular Australia, the United States and Britain, have actively colluded in the bloodbath of Indonesian annexation of East Timor which wiped out a third of its population. The UN has served, and continues to serve, simply as a cover for those interests. Meanwhile, with a few courageous exceptions, the media of the world remained silent.

'The international community continues to miss the point in the case of East Timor. There is only one crime... To the capitalist governors of the world, Timor's petroleum smells better than Timorese blood and tears. It even seems as if the United Nations itself is easing the path of the aggressor, giving it the time and conditions necessary to execute the ethnic and cultural genocide of the Timorese people and, finally, declare that East Timor is definitely integrated into the Indonesian republic.'

These words, quoted by journalist John Pilger, were written in 1983 by a priest after the massacre of an entire village by the Indonesian army. They ring as true today.

In December 1975 US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger visited Indonesian president Suharto to give him the green light to invade East Timor. US arms were secretly shipped to Indonesia to support the invasion. Philip Lischty, the CIA desk officer in Jakarta at the time, described the annexation as a 'free-fire zone... and all because we didn't want some little country being neutral or leftist at the UN.' The US alliance with Indonesia would override any 'humanitarian' concerns in the coming years. For Australia, the greatest prize was the Timor Sea, believed to contain the seventh-largest oil and gas reserves on earth; Australia's access to these riches is guaranteed by the East Timor Gap treaty with Indonesia. Britain is concerned to protect both its export of



In the lead-up to the Referendum: an independence supporter harassed by Indonesian police and militia.

arms to Indonesia and the investments of almost every major British multinational from Shell and BP to Glaxo Wellcome. The USA, Britain and Australia trained and armed Indonesia's special forces, Kopassus, which spearheaded the invasion and which is responsible for co-ordinating the 'scorched earth' policy in East Timor over the last eight months. In April, as reports of army-backed paramilitaries emerged, Admiral Dennis Blair, the US commander-in-chief in the Pacific, visited Indonesia's military commander Wiranto to assure him of continued US backing. 'Wiranto was delighted', reported the New York Nation, '[and] took this as the green light to progress with the militia operation.'

From 1976, when Kissinger instructed the US ambassador to the UN to ensure 'that the UN proved utterly ineffective [on East Timor]', to its shameful role today, the UN has acted to protect these interests.

United Nations complicity

The explosion of violence which followed the referendum was entirely predictable. From as early as last April reports were emerging of pro-Jakarta militia murders, kidnappings and torture. Houses and churches were burned. The United Nations even had proof that the Indonesian military were actively fomenting the terror, arming and training the militia. The escalating violence forced the vote to be postponed twice. Yet the UN sent an unarmed mission to oversee referendum preparations. Within 48 hours of the vote itself, an East Timorese UN worker had been stabbed to death and armed militia were rampaging through Dili, taking over the airport and setting up roadblocks while the Indonesian army and police stood idly by. Yet Jamsheed Marker, the representative of UN Secretary General, praised their role. Within a week, militias and army were overtly acting together, cheerfully embarking on an orgy of looting, rape, murder and arson. What did the UN do? Send orders to the East Timor mission to ship out, giving the lie to its posters which had promised, prior to the referendum, 'the UN will stay'. Only when UN workers based in Dili refused to abandon local staff to their fate, to say nothing of the refugees sheltering in the UN compound, were 17

plane-loads of refugees finally airlifted to safety in Darwin before the compound closed its gates. It took two weeks for the UN ambassador to come to East Timor to visit the wreckage that was Dili.

Meanwhile, East Timor was being ethnically cleansed, as army and militia drove people from their homes, burning entire towns, butchering communities. One witness counted 145 macheted corpses left to rot on a single street. Reports emerged of the heads of men and women mounted on spikes along the road. Men, women and children were loaded into trucks and dumped in military camps across the border in pro-Indonesian West Timor. Journalist John Aglionby has spoken of forced marches of women and children across the border, with stragglers kicked and beaten into line. The camps themselves are being purged, with pro-independence activists 'disappearing' overnight. Children are dying of hunger; diseases such as TB stalk the land. East Timor is empty: the Red Cross estimates that 800,000 people, out of a population of 850,000 have been displaced. 120,000 are sheltering with the pro-independence Falantil guerrillas in the mountains - where UN food drops took two weeks to arrive.

Making East Timor safe for imperialism

The aim of the terror was initially to prevent a vote for independence. Having failed to do more than slightly



Foreign Secretary Cook with President Suharto: com

mor by imperialism



Minutes later he was shot

dent the huge majority - 76% - in favour of independence, more direct imperialist intervention is needed to ensure the territory remains governed in the interests of Indonesia and its backers. One option is to force a second ballot in a depopulated land. Another is partition - merging the west of East Timor with West Timor. The army is ready to use the issue of East Timor to topple Indonesian President Habibie, and the other Indonesian parties may refuse to ratify the referendum. Or the UN may force the independence movement to negotiate with the Indonesian butchers a resolution acceptable to imperialism. This, after all, was the role of the UN in Angola in 1972, where it ignored the rearmament of the US- and South African-backed UNITA bandits in the run-up to the election. When its popular opponents, the MPLA, won, despite the terror campaign, UNITA was geared up to go to war. The UN then forced the MPLA to share power with UNITA, all to protect imperialism's interest in Angola's huge mineral, diamond and oil reserves. The 'peacekeepers' of the United Nations are never more than instruments of imperialist interests. The long struggle of the people of East Timor for independence and freedom is far from over.

Cat Wiener

*John Pilger is one of the few journalists to have regularly reported on East Timor over the years and exposed the depths of imperialism's complicity in Indonesia's crimes in the territory. I am indebted to his recent articles in the *Guardian* and *New Statesman* for much of the background material in this article.



in interests

Indonesia: savaged by imperialism

Four hundred years of imperial oppression produces the barbarity inflicted on East Timor. Indonesia has been mangled and corrupted by Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, Japan and the USA. The victory of the East Timorese will be the victory of all the oppressed of the Indonesian archipelago, peoples who have resisted for as long as they have been oppressed. British imperialism has been their enemy. TREVOR RAYNE looks at Indonesia's recent history.



1945-46 British Intervention

Japan invaded Indonesia in 1942. Their surrender on 15 August 1945 was followed two days later by Indonesia's declaration of independence by two nationalist leaders Sukarno and Muhammad Hatta. Throughout Java nationalists seized control of the main towns. Dutch capitalists could not contemplate losing investments worth \$1.4 billion, yielding \$100 million profit in 1941. One sixth of the Netherlands' wealth was invested in the region. The British Labour government sought to re-establish the pre-war status quo.

British troops arrived in Jakarta on 29 September 1945 accompanied by Dutch officials who would take over the country when sufficient Dutch troops arrived. Indonesians resisted the plan. Japanese soldiers were ordered to fight for Britain.

In Surabaya, Indonesia's second biggest city, the RAF dropped leaflets ordering the Indonesians to hand over weapons and surrender the city to British forces. For three days the RAF bombed and the Royal Navy shelled Surabaya as British troops fought their way in. 10,000 nationalists and 900 British were killed. Unable to comprehend the ferocity of the resistance, Mounbatten, commander of Britain's Far Eastern forces, blamed Trotskyists, 'since presumably everybody will combine to condemn Trotskyism.'

Surabaya became a rallying call of the independence struggle. After four weeks of fighting in Bandung the British evicted 100,000 people at gunpoint. Retreating nationalists burned down half the city rather than surrender it to the enemy. During November 1945 the RAF flew 148 bombing sorties over Indonesia. Many villages were destroyed. On 13 December 1945 Japanese troops, under British command, sacked the town of Tebing Tinggi massacring over 2,000 people. That Japanese troops were fighting for the British was hushed up at home by the Labour government.

British and nationalist forces stalemated. The British government armed Dutch forces to take over from them. 947 British and Indian troops were killed by November 1946 when British forces withdrew. The 23rd Indian Division suffered more casualties than in four years fighting Japan. 1,000 Japanese soldiers and 40,000 Indonesians were killed. Some 600 Indian

troops defected to the nationalists. One British unit refused to fight at Surabaya and a British officer, a communist sympathiser, John Eyre, was sent home for 'editing a seditious paper for the troops'. Australian trade unions boycotted transportation of troops and munitions to Indonesia.

Mounbatten told the chiefs of staff in London that a military solution in Indonesia would require 'full scale war' followed by a guerrilla war, a 'situation analogous to Ireland after the last war, but on a much larger scale'. Indonesia warned British imperialism what it faced if it refused to concede Indian independence. Dutch forces left Indonesia in 1949 and Sukarno became president.

1965 Send in the SAS

The three million-strong PKI was the second biggest communist party in Asia after the Communist Party of China. It supported Sukarno who promoted PKI leaders to prominent positions. Sukarno nationalised Dutch enterprises in 1957 and created a state petroleum company, Pertamina, to break Royal Dutch Shell's domination of the oil industry.

By 1965 the US war in Vietnam had escalated. The US government feared that another 'Asian domino' would fall in Indonesia. On 1 October 1965 General Suharto led a military coup, claiming prevention of a communist coup. There followed what the CIA described as 'the greatest mass murder of modern times'. Communists and sympathisers were slaughtered. Estimates of the dead reach over one million. 200,000

political activists were imprisoned.

In 1965 senior British civil servant Sir Robert Thompson used British strategies previously deployed against communists in Malaysia to help devise the USA's Phoenix Programme in Vietnam: a programme of 'strategic hamlets' surrounded by free-fire zones etc. Labour Defence Secretary Denis Healey visited Borneo in Malaysia, neighbouring Indonesia, in 1964. 'It was on that visit... that I came to appreciate the extraordinary qualities of these elite forces (the SAS and Special Boat Service).'

The PKI had a base area in Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo. In summer 1965 Healey says he 'allowed' British forces to enter Indonesia from Malaysian territory with support from Australian and New Zealand battalions. Britain deployed 17,000 troops, 114 were killed and 181 wounded. Indonesian casualties are unknown.

Suharto went on to pass laws making foreign investment in the country easier and opened it to multinational oil companies.

1975 East Timor

'As far as Britain is concerned, it wouldn't make much difference to us if the Labour Party were in power. Labour doesn't have a different position than Thatcher, who is mainly interested in selling arms to Indonesia. It was under a British Labour government that the Indonesians invaded East Timor, and the British ambassador in Jakarta in fact recommended very cynically that the Foreign Office support the Indonesian incorporation of East Timor.'

British investment in Indonesia

Indonesia's ruling class is dependent on multinational capital and finance, without them they would collapse. President Habibie, Suharto's replacement after last year's rising, is a 'good friend' of chair of General Electric John Welch and former German Chancellor Kohl. Two years ago Indonesia's economy suffered the worst implosion of any economy since World War Two. The IMF propped the economy up with \$43 billion credits. Indonesia's debt-rescheduling negotiations are chaired by Deutsche Bank and Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi. Among British banks HSBC bank is owed \$1.8 billion by Indonesia. Standard Chartered \$1.7 billion. Following the transfer of government funds into ruling Golkar party members' accounts, the IMF asked the British accountancy firm PriceWaterhouse Coopers to report. The report has been suppressed.

British firms with contracts tied to the Suharto elite are Thames Water, Rolls Royce, Rio Tinto, BP, United Biscuits, PowerGen, Taylor Woodrow, GEC Alsthom, BAE, and the Bank of Scotland. Shell, Unilever, Glaxo Wellcome, BOC Group, Marks and Spencers and others from the glittering array of British multinationals have stakes in Indonesia. This money, these companies are why the Indonesian ruling class thinks it can get away with mass murder.

Jose Ramos Horta, 1986, then Fretilin representative to the UN.

Vietnam defeated US imperialism and reunited the country in 1975. As the liberation movements of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique drove towards victory, the fascist colonial rule of Salazar and Caetano in Portugal was toppled by a military and popular revolt in 1974. Guinea-Bissau achieved independence in 1974, Angola and Mozambique in 1975. Both Angola and Mozambique were to be invaded by South Africa. On 28 November 1975 the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (Fretilin) declared independence from Portugal. On 7 December 1975, less than 24 hours after US President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger left Jakarta, Indonesian forces invaded East Timor. Kissinger said 'the USA understands the Indonesian position on the question' and that the USA would not recognise the Democratic Republic of East Timor. By January 1976 80,000 Timorese were dead but the British Labour government representative at the UN announced, 'We were pleased to hear from the representative of Indonesia... that the situation in East Timor is returning to normal... [and the] assurances made by Indonesia that it has no claims over East Timor.' By 1978 estimates of Timorese dead were 200,000 - a third of the population.

British, US and Australian arms, loans and investment have enabled and encouraged the Indonesian regime's war on the East Timorese and others. It began before the invasion. On 16 October 1975 five journalists - two British - working for Australian television were killed by Indonesian military in East Timor because they knew about Indonesia's operations in East Timor. Neither the Australian nor British governments made any effort to find out how the journalists had died. Australia publicly repeated the Indonesian line that there were no operations in East Timor. Encouraged by this complicity Indonesian forces took Atambua, inside East Timor, and prepared for the final invasion.

The USA and Britain abstained in the 12 December 1975 UN vote calling for Indonesia's withdrawal from East Timor and for East Timor's independence. US military assistance to Indonesia doubled the following year. Nevertheless, in December 1977 the *International Herald Tribune* reported the Indonesian military 'are running out of inventory. The operations in East Timor have pushed them to the wall.' On 4 April 1978 British Aerospace (BAe) agreed to supply Indonesia with eight Hawk ground attack/trainer aircraft worth £25 million. The Hawk is designed for low level strafing, carrying rockets, cluster and fire bombs. BAe's managing director celebrated: 'The Indonesian contract is superb news... it is an important breakthrough into the southeast Asia market, which is one of great potential.'

The Indonesian airforce used defoliants in Fretilin-held areas. Fretilin identified US pilots and advisers. A policy of 'encirclement and annihilation' ensued. The population was herded into camps and starved. Up to 70% of the people suffered tuberculosis. East Timorese women were forcibly sterilised while a policy of transmigration shipped people from Java to East Timor.

A third of Labour Party MPs signed a motion condemning the invasion. This did not prevent the sale of the Hawks, which the Foreign Office, under David Owen, justified as fostering friendly relationships with Indonesia beneficial to human rights. In December 1978 'left-wing' Minister for Overseas Development Judith Hart echoed Indonesian propaganda characterising East Timor as 'backward', referring to 'political tensions between East Timor and the government of Indonesia.' 400,000 East Timorese were held in 'resettlement camps'. The Labour government abstained in four annual UN votes for Indonesia's withdrawal. After the Hawks came helicopters, missiles, frigates, mines, armoured vehicles, machine guns and training programmes.



The Third International 1919, the Communist International

In March 1919 the Bolsheviks called for the formation of a new International, a worldwide organisation to unite the revolutionary forces, parties, groups and individuals in every country to overthrow capitalism and imperialism. Maclean supported the call:

As early as 1915, both he and Peter Petroff had issued clarion calls through the columns of *Vanguard* for a new International to replace the now discredited Second.

Lenin explained why it was necessary to form a new organisation based exclusively on communist politics. No pretence of unity could be made with organisations calling themselves socialist that had supported their respective ruling classes in waging an imperialist war in which the working class had been slaughtered by the millions and the world and its peoples divided up between the exploiters. The Second International, to which the British Labour Party was affiliated, had been socialist in words and imperialist in deeds:

...we have broken unreservedly with the Second International because we became convinced that it was hopeless, incorrigible, played the part of a servant to imperialism, of a vehicle of bourgeois influence, bourgeois lies and bourgeois corruption in the labour movement.

Lenin

This was no mere difference of opinion among socialists, but a life and death matter for the working class. The 'socialism' of the Second International, what became Social Democracy, had finally 'rendered hangman's service to the bourgeoisie' as Lenin described it in July 1919. He was referring to the active collaboration of leaders of the German Social Democratic Party in the brutal murders of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and hundreds of revolutionary workers by monarchist army officers only months previously. Ramsay MacDonald, who was to become Prime Minister of the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929, expressed his civilised understanding of the role of the Second International:

...the whole Second International is anti-Bolshevik. It is indeed the only real bulwark against Bolshevism short of military executions.

The founding conference of the Third International invited 'the tendency represented by Maclean'. He was the only individual requested by name but did not participate. However his political conduct was entirely aligned with the positions of the International.

Hands off Russia and the British Socialist Party

The annual conference of his party, the British Socialist Party, was held in April 1919 and Maclean in moving the call for 'Hands off Russia' insisted that keeping the 'capitalist class busy at home' could best defend the revolution. Although he was a prominent speaker at many large rallies of the 'Hands off Russia' campaign he was not convinced that this



Lenin addressing the crowd in Red Square, 1 May 1919

form of action was of itself sufficient. He was later to express doubts about the direction of the work, as plotted by the BSP executive:

...he...objected to their lack of an industrial and political perspective for Britain: 'Hands Off Russia' was the only policy they had.

Theodore Rothstein of the BSP executive approached Maclean to become a paid organiser of the campaign on the condition that he give up his other political and industrial agitation. He was also asked to work with an individual, introduced to the campaign by Rothstein, whose political record was extremely dubious. Lieutenant-Colonel L'Estrange Malone, an ex Coalition Liberal MP who had previously published a pamphlet called 'Bolshevik Plot To Seize Power in Britain'. By 1921 this clown, who had been elected to the executive of the Communist Party, was down at Scotland Yard offering 'to exercise a restraining influence on the Communists' in return for charges of sedition being dropped. Maclean fumed:

To ask me to work with Malone for revolution is a joke. A man like that ought not to be allowed in a revolutionary Marxist party...To allow a Malone to lead a revolutionary party after a record such as his is high treason to communism.

The Vanguard, December 1920

Rothstein had an unconvincing political record of his own, castigated by Lenin for refusing to oppose the war he spent the duration working comfortably as a translator in the British government's War Office!

At Easter 1920, Maclean was expelled from the BSP, which in effect was to become the Communist Party of Great Britain. Maclean's warnings about its being infiltrated and manipulated by government agents were rejected and it is from this period that comments and observations about Maclean's political and mental stability began to circulate in the socialist movement and secret government reports. With some satisfaction a

Special Branch report of early 1920 stated:

The British Communists have at last become convinced that John Maclean is insane.

Once again, as in Maclean's allegations of his prison food being drugged, his concerns and suspicions about agents and government spies were scoffed at and dismissed as groundless exaggerations and evidence of mania. Yet an issue of the *Daily Herald* of the 17th May 1919 spoke of there existing in Britain:

...a vast system of espionage paralleled only by the spying at the time of the Chartist troubles.

The 'revolutionaries' who maligned Maclean's arguments had blinded themselves to the real circumstances existing in Ireland. Dublin Castle was the sinister centre for a network of British government agents and torturers who were to direct the unfolding terror against a people prepared to fight for their independence.

Hands off Ireland and the Communist International

Maclean and his comrades went on to carry out the most consistent and principled work in support of the Irish struggle against British imperialism. The comrades carried out the Communist International policy in spirit and deed, unlike the Communist Party of Great Britain. Maclean refounded *The Vanguard* as a revolutionary newspaper and every issue from May 1920 onwards carried major articles exposing Britain's war against the Irish people and arguing for working class support for Ireland's struggle. 20,000 copies of a pamphlet written by Maclean were sold. It was no tame, liberal plea for Britain to simply respect Ireland's clearly expressed wish for independence. 'The Irish Tragedy, Scotland's Disgrace' contained details of the repression and violence of British forces.

Here is a typical 1920 week's work by Dublin Castle, ending April 17: Raids, 1,135; arrests, 260; sentences,

John Maclean: and the Communist International

2; proclamations, 2; courts-martial, 2; armed assaults, 16; deportations, 92; murders, 4. This information is carefully suppressed by the Government so that ordinary people are forced to come to the entirely wrong conclusions as to the real situation in Ireland.

The British had opened their gaols and loosed the notorious Black and Tans against the Irish people. Bayonetting of civilians, looting and burning of towns, torture of prisoners, shootings of old people and children by the British Army fuelled the struggle against imperialism.

When the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison, hundreds of thousands of 'Hands Off Ireland' leaflets were put out by Maclean's group and the call was made for a General Strike for the withdrawal of British troops at street meetings throughout Scotland. The most prominent socialist of his day was campaigning amongst the mining, foundry and mill towns where he had fought for 15 years. Just as he had courageously opposed the First World War out in the streets, Maclean stood up to say:

This is more important than protesting against higher rents or the high cost of living. It is acquiescing and participating in the murder of a race rightly protesting its own right to rule itself.

The inactivity of the 'communists' soon to be organised in the CPGB did not go unnoticed by the Third International. The Bolshevik, Radek, roasted them at the Second Congress in July 1920:

The International will not judge the British comrades by the articles that they write in *The Call* and *The Workers' Dreadnought* but by the number of comrades that are thrown into jail for agitating in the colonial countries...It is very easy at the moment to speak out against intervention in Russia since even the bourgeois left is against it. It is harder for the British comrades to take up the cause of Irish independence.

When Quelch of the British Socialist Party explained these difficulties by stating that British workers would regard it as treachery if he were to help the Irish rebellion, an Irish delegate to the Congress replied:

In relation to the claim, made in the Commission, that English workers would regard support for the revolutionary struggle of the colonies against British imperialism as treason, it must be said that the faster English workers learn to commit such treason against the bourgeois state the better it will be for the revolutionary movement.

Without a doubt Maclean should have participated in the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. He was concerned that Lenin and the International had been mis-

informed as to the situation in Britain. William Gallagher had clearly impressed the Bolshevik leader with his account of how:

...he and his comrades have organised, and done so splendidly, the revolutionary movement in Glasgow...and used this to organise a mass movement against the war.

Lenin

Yet it was Gallagher who had, as Chair of the Clyde Workers Committee, sabotaged strike action against arrests in 1916 and who was able to make 'socialist' speeches without mentioning the war. Maclean could have contributed enormously to the debates and, as he had in Ireland, been able to learn also. While Harry McShane said that Maclean was the first person he had ever heard describing himself as a 'Leninist' it is evident that this was an expression of his loyalty and commitment to the example of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in overthrowing capitalism and challenging imperialism. The discussions at the Congress frequently made reference to the material connections between imperialism and opportunism, to the reactionary role of the labour aristocracy and its various political expressions in misleading the masses and to the tactics necessary to combat this. A reading of Maclean's writings, which were mostly agitational, confirms that his understanding of these betrayals remained at the level of seeing reformism as simply wrong ideas. In explaining his subsequent break with the British Socialist Party, he stated that it was:

...dominated by the idea of the reform of capitalism, rather than a determination to destroy capitalism and inaugurate the workers' republic.

The advice of Lenin and the International would not have been wasted on Maclean. He had always worked amongst the masses. It would have grounded that work in the theory and practice of Leninism as the principles and tactics of socialism in the imperialist epoch:

It is therefore our duty, if we wish to remain socialist, to go down lower and deeper to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and the whole purport of the struggle against opportunism. By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of workers, that they are the vehicles of bourgeois ideas and influences, that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful vicissitudes of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices.

The last period of Maclean's life found him again amongst those masses continuing the fight for socialism and the revolution.

Michael McGregor

UNDER PRYING EYES: SNOOPING IN THE WORKPLACE

In Blair's Britain, as government welfare policies push the poverty gap ever wider, those who run the system are becoming increasingly paranoid about protecting their property and profits. This has led to a boom in the security industry and an increase in snooping, especially by CCTV. It is estimated the average person in a major city could be filmed up to 300 times a day by CCTV - a terrible invasion of privacy.

It is in the workplace, however, that this invasion manifests itself to the greatest extent, with bosses demonstrating their mistrust of every worker. The examples below (taken from a recent article in *The Observer*) illustrate some of the methodology currently employed by companies in Britain to snoop on and intimidate their workers. This methodology is used in some form or other throughout the major capitalist societies, as they use every means possible to hold on to their power and profit.

Each method has its own descriptive name:

- **The Listener**, who listens in on telephone calls. It is estimated that 40% of US companies record their workers' calls and many British companies are enthusiastically following

this trend.

- **The Watcher**, who checks employees e-mails - again an increasing trend.

- **The 'Psychic' Watcher**, who uses computer software to log workers' key depressions, whether they are

was taken to a new extreme in Japan, where some firms have toilet bowls that automatically test for drugs use and then film the people who have a positive result using CCTV installed inside the cubicle. Our bosses in Britain will try this - although it is reported that new legislation will ban bosses from putting cameras in toilets.

- **The Poltergeist**, who sifts through workers' lockers or desks. This most primitive form of snooping involves bosses looking through workers' personal belongings for stolen property or 'evidence of people fiddling the system'. This is used constantly to monitor workers who want to fight back against bad bosses.

Add to this the intimidating tactics of the DSS - dole snoopers, New Deal questionnaires, etc and the picture emerges of a society obsessed with surveillance. Companies in Britain are constantly invading people's privacy in a direct infringement of their human rights.

As the crisis of capitalism deepens as the privileged minority perceives any threat to its property, its profits, its lifestyle - the cult of surveillance will broaden and deepen. Making workers aware of this is part of the fightback against this sick capitalist system.

Mike Pearce



typing, operating computer terminals or involved in bulk data entry. This is often sold to operators as a bonus-related benefit, but in fact is used to intimidate workers and as a tool for enforced 'increased productivity', ie lowering wages and introducing slave labour environments.

- **The Brooding Presence**, using covert and overt CCTV to video workers at all times. This form of surveillance

typical, operating computer terminals or involved in bulk data entry. This is often sold to operators as a bonus-related benefit, but in fact is used to intimidate workers and as a tool for enforced 'increased productivity', ie lowering wages and introducing slave labour environments.

As the crisis of capitalism deepens as the privileged minority perceives any threat to its property, its profits, its lifestyle - the cult of surveillance will broaden and deepen. Making workers aware of this is part of the fightback against this sick capitalist system.

Mike Pearce

FIGHTING POVERTY PAY IS NOT A CRIME

One regular feature of the fight against poverty pay is our petitioning and leafleting outside Jobcentres up and down the country. The object of this exercise is to break through the feelings of isolation and desperation of claimants who know only too well the harsh realities of survival on poverty pay.



The vast majority of jobs on offer in Jobcentres are either advertised at the £3.60 an hour rate or only available to school leavers, where employers don't even have to pay this slave labour rate.

We generate a lot of interest and support from claimants who experience the realities of unemployment.

and the role of the Employment Services who are not there to find us decent jobs, but primarily to get us off benefits and dole statistics.

In August, six of us campaigners gathered outside Blackburn Jobcentre, as we have been doing regularly for the past two years. One morning however we were told to 'move off' by the security guard who informed us we were 'causing an obstruction'. We refused. We were as usual generating a good response from claimants who were eager to sign our petitions and share their own experiences with us. Shortly after, the police arrived. Again we were told that we were causing an obstruction, which simply wasn't true. We told the police that we were actually standing on land which belongs to a local Age Concern shop and that we were quite within our rights to be there. Eventually the cops backed down and we carried on. This goes to show that those managers are not happy with what we're doing and will try anything to get rid of us - even calling the cops. We will continue campaigning outside Jobcentres for as long as dole workers continue to be bullied claimants into applying for demeaning slave labour jobs and schemes. From the response we get from the unemployed we know that we're saying something they agree with.

Fighting poverty pay is not a crime! Join the fightback - together we'll crack it!

Atan Hope

T&G victimise sacked worker

On 11 August I had to attend a meeting with Dave McCall, the T&G regional secretary, in Manchester. At the meeting McCall reminded me that he was 'pursuing a formal complaint' against me for protesting against Bill Morris' refusal to pay me victimisation benefit.

In opening the meeting McCall warned me that if he did not get 'a satisfactory solution' from our 'discussion' I could be expelled from the union. He then claimed that I, or other people demonstrating with me, had intimidated female members of staff by shouting into their faces with a megaphone and that we took photographs of women workers in the T&G offices.

I told him that none of this was true and reminded him that our protest was a peaceful and legitimate one to highlight the fact that the union had abandoned me after I was sacked for recruiting members for the T&G. I also informed him that it was my belief that the allegations he was making were designed to discredit me and to undermine the campaign that is continuing to fight for my reinstatement. I explained the severe financial hardship that my son and I are suffering and the fact that I am

unable to get another job mainly as a result of the very public and high-profile campaign about my sacking. I also reminded him that I had been assured, and it was guaranteed by the



T&G leader Bill Morris

union's own rulebook, that I would be paid victimisation benefit if sacked or victimised for organising a union. This benefit would have gone

to one way in helping me instead of the derisory £500 given to me by the regional committee - an offer only after McCall insisted that I write a begging letter to ask for it.

McCall stated that the question of receiving any financial assistance from the union is finished and that indeed my whole case is now over. As far as the union is concerned and that I should just accept the fact.

In summing up McCall indicated that if I was to accept this fact and apologise for intimidating the female members of staff he would recommend that no further action would be taken against me. When I refused to agree to his deal he said that he would now refer the matter to Bill Morris, and again reminded me that I may be expelled. As the meeting closed I gave him a written statement summarising my views. He immediately screwed up the document and threw it in the bin thus demonstrating yet again the contemptuous and disgraceful way that I have been treated by the T&G.

McCall's actions prove that he had no intention of giving me a fair hearing and that the allegations are a complete fabrication designed solely to throw me out of the union. As more and more workers begin to fight back against attacks on their conditions and wages they will be forced to challenge, as in my case and those of the famous carers, the Liverpool dockers and presently the SkyChef workers, those very organisations that claim to represent them.

Nigel Cook

SkyChefs and the bosses' union

The Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) is closely involved in managing changes in the pay and conditions of its members. Not for the benefit of its members, readers must note, but for the benefit of the employers. What is happening in the £5 billion air food industry at Heathrow Airport is a clear demonstration that the union is serving the interests of large companies by preparing the workforce to accept flexible hours, low pay and short term contracts.

At LSG SkyChefs 273 workers, mainly Asian women remain locked out after nine months of official strike. The T&G has made every effort to keep the strikers isolated from the 30,000 union members with a Heathrow Airport. They are not allowed to hold a proper picket, but if any of the 273 miss attendance at the daily meeting held outside the gates, their strike pay is docked. They have been kept going by promises of an industrial tribunal, which keeps getting postponed and which, in any case, cannot get them their jobs back.

The T&G settled three months into the strike with another food packaging company, Alpha, on exactly the terms that the SkyChefs workers struck against. All the other companies are now beginning to impose these terms and conditions. Clearly Alan Green, the regional T&G official, was not 'on-message' when he first urged the strikers to vote 'yes' on a

ballot for a 24 hour strike. Not until SkyChefs' management sacked them all six hours later did he become a moderniser and understand that the union's new role is to organise the transfer to low wages and flexible working hours.

Readers may wonder what the trade union movement thinks it is doing when it openly colludes with the introduction of not more but less pay, not shorter but longer hours, not skilling but deskilling the workforce as it is doing at the Heathrow air food industry. Will this not undermine the union itself? Do its full-timers out of a job? Make the workforce indifferent or hostile to the union? It seems that these are all risks the T&G is prepared to take, anything rather than lose accommodation with the big bosses and stand outside of the system, fighting for workers' rights. In any case, there are rumours which suggest that union fees are paid in by management on a head count basis. So union membership and income still goes on even where the workers are not aware that they have joined up or, rather, been joined up.

What is clear is that the T&G is a bosses' union, it belongs to the bosses. As the band Chumbawamba said, 'New Labour so do out the dockers, just like they sold out the rest of us'. We can add, 'T&G sold out SkyChefs just like they sold out the dockers.'

Liz Tully



Parkhurst prison revolt 1969

On 24 October 1969 prisoners at Parkhurst prison on the Isle of Wight rose up in the biggest show of resistance against oppression in British gaols since the Dartmoor mutiny in 1932. The Parkhurst revolt was the spark which ignited three years of protests against prison conditions, some of which were organised by PROP (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners), while others were entirely spontaneous.

Parkhurst prison opened in 1839 and for 160 years has predominantly housed prisoners serving long sentences, the island location serving to isolate them and render their communication with the outside world deliberately arduous.

The late 1960s saw the publication of the Mountbatten report into prison security. The effect of its publication was felt throughout the prison system even before any of the actual recommendations were implemented or discarded. Mountbatten recommended the concentration of all dangerous prisoners in one maximum security facility to be built on the Isle of Wight, together with a system of classification of all prisoners by security risk. The 'concentration plan' was rejected in favour of the option of dispersing high security prisoners to a number of locations, Parkhurst being one. The dispersal system is still in operation, as is escape-risk categorisation. Mountbatten's report represented the end of a period during which at least up-service was paid to reforming the system and the beginning of a new emphasis on physical security, control and containment. Prison officers were overjoyed by the renewed licence to abuse.

After the Parkhurst riot, an inquiry was carried out by Assistant Prison Commissioner Michael Gale, a former governor of Wandsworth, expected by no-one to take the side of prisoners against the authorities. However, Gale's report was so damning of prison officers and the administration that Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan refused to publish it.

Brian Stratton was released from Parkhurst a few months before the riot and wrote *Who Guards the Guards?* (WGTG) in an attempt to highlight the prevalent abuse. It is still one of the best books ever written about the inside of British prisons. Earlier this year, BRIAN STRATTON spoke to FRF.

Anyone reading WGTG gets the immediate feeling that the physical conditions in Parkhurst were almost irrelevant compared to the mentality and behaviour of the screws. What can I say about Parkhurst? As far as actual conditions it was just another prison. It's the screws that make or break it. When I first went there the governor was called Packham and he had a way of working which was maximum security inside the perimeter, maximum freedom inside the prison. In other words, your cell doors got opened for a couple of hours every night and you could go and play

cards or whatever. But, of course the screws didn't like that. And then they got rid of Packham and Muller came. And as one of the screws said to me: 'We've got a licence to kill now'.

You organised to get the message out about the brutality. This took various forms, from sit-down protests to smuggling out a 'round robin' petition to the press. How difficult or easy was it? That's a good question. Because there are obviously a fair amount of people in there who we didn't want to know about what we were doing. So it took about four or five weeks to organize the round robin to *The People*. That was my idea, having the round robin, so that they couldn't say 'this guy's signature is at the top'.

With the sit-down strike, we just used the structure in there. You had Londoners, who were top dog, then you had Scousers, Geordies, Irish, all different little gangs. So we just went to the boss man on each gang and said 'This is what we'd like to do because they beat up so-and-so last night', and we just did it. So those who you couldn't trust in a million years couldn't walk off the exercise yard in front of everyone else.

In the sixties you didn't have the same kind of communication as now. Everything had to be done on visits. I sent a clandestine letter out once and the wrong person got hold of it and sent it back to the gaol. I'd written in it 'I'm doing it this way because the censor is an idiot' and the screw read it out when I was nicked for it. Even Muller got a grin out of that one.

Despite all the difficulties, *The People* did eventually print your round robin on their front page. They printed it but they just let it go after that. And that was one of my problems with the so-called underground magazines as well. I was a journalist for *Ink* for a bit and we got this campaign going about prisons. Letters were pouring in, many smuggled out of prison, and they published them for three or four weeks but all of a sudden they didn't want to do prisons any more. I said to Richard Neville 'there's no point stopping now - this will get bigger and bigger' but they didn't want to know. And the interesting thing with Mr Neville was that he got nicked over obscenity in *Oz* and he went to gaol. Afterwards, he came to see me and I said 'Well, you've had a bit of Wandsworth now, let's get going, but they had frightened the life out of him and he didn't want to know'.

By the time the riot actually happened at Parkhurst, you were out. Your book deals with the build-up to

given the standard Parkhurst tour but Stan dug his feet in and said 'I want to see the chokey, the block' and he told me he'd never been more scared in his life than when he walked down those stairs. And I said to him,



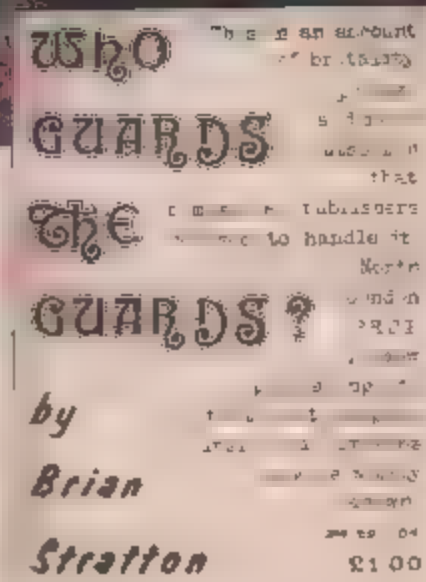
The resistance to brutality which began at Parkhurst in 1969 spread around the prison system. Strikes, riots and demonstrations became widespread. In 1972 Parkhurst prisoners took to the rooftop in a demonstration of solidarity with the prisoners at neighbouring Alderney prison who were protesting against conditions.

it. How did you feel when you heard the news it had kicked off? Trevor Aspinall from *The People* rang and told me. I felt totally sick. He said 'Come down to the paper tomorrow. We'll do this and that and the other' and I remember swearing at him, saying 'If you'd done something when I came to see you when I got out, this would not have happened. This is what I've been trying to avoid'.

It was the treatment of Timmy Noonan which started it all. Timmy Noonan was a diamond of a man. You get a preacher coming and telling you on the exercise yard that he has seen a man laying in a pool of blood and excrement and this man of god then tells you he can't phone your MP and tell him because he might lose his job. Man of god! I've no time for religion.

We had done the usual thing and seen the two-faced governor, who denied anything was going on. Then we got another message from Timmy that they were still doing him.

It kicked off the day that the MPs Stan Newens and Joan Lester had been down to Parkhurst. I'd got them to go down and even then it took three months. I got out in June and they went in October. They were



if you're going down those stairs into one of the cells, you don't walk down, you get thrown down. He asked one of the block screws how long he'd been on that job and he said four years. They're only supposed to be there for three months. You've still got your chokey blocks today and you still get chokey screws who gravitate towards them - sadists they become a little clique and even the other screws don't like them.

It was only supposed to be a demonstration. It wasn't planned as a riot. The screws turned it into violence. The prisoners took over what were called the stage rooms and took two screws each side hostage. The side where Frank was, the screws were put in a room and a man called Jimmy Robson was told 'Whatever you do, don't let anyone hurt those screws' - this is 'mad' Frank Fraser saying this. And those screws did not get hurt. And after they gained control - the whole thing was over in two hours - you come out of the stage

rooms and go into this tunnel, known as the bath house tunnel, and they lined it with riot sticks. You couldn't see the whitewash on the walls - it was just blood and shit. I tried, with James Morton, the solicitor I got to represent some of them, to get a forensic expert to get a sample off the wall, but they whitewashed it the next day. Jimmy Robson was the last of the men - about 150 altogether - to come through the tunnel and Jack Smith, one of the screws who'd been held hostage, put his arm round Jimmy and said 'This man hasn't done a thing. You do him and you'll have to do me as well'.

After the revolt, you stayed involved, talking to the press, and helping with the defence of those on trial for riot. The first thing I did was to ring the *Express* because their headline said that the riot had been because Kroger, the spy, had been returned to East Germany. They put the phone down on me. Then I was on the television which didn't do me any favours.

I got James Morton to take three of the cases. God knows how much the riot trial cost. Special assizes set up in Ryde. QCs and Juniors and god knows what. They were charged with riot and I think Martyn Frape was charged with attempted murder as well but got a not guilty. The judge to begin with was Lawton, who was the son of a prison governor. Ex-governor of Wandsworth, the first governor ever to have been a screw. I got *The Times* to dig into him and they published a bit about how Lawton stood as a fascist candidate in the 1930s and the solicitors in the case got him replaced.

Mainstream publishers liked WGTG but were too afraid of libel actions to publish it. It was finally published by PROP. What is your assessment of that organisation? When I first met PROP they were getting by on sales of my book and donations. A year later I met Geoff Cogger who was then running it and he said the Cadbury's foundation were funding them. So I said, 'That's why you've stopped doing anything. That's why people stop me in pubs and say "We can't get nothing done by PROP" over somebody being beaten up in Chelmsford or wherever. Once you take money from these people you're fucked. Because if you do get a case you could really get some publicity for which is adverse publicity for the forces of law and order. You know that the grant is going to get stopped. So you don't do it, and so the union, the organisation stops'.

When Parkhurst went off the Labour Party was in power, as it is today. I remember Victor Collins as Lord Stonham. He stood up in the House of Commons in the 1950s when they were in opposition. Fifteen shillings a week was supposed to feed each prisoner. Stonham says 'My wife spends 15 shillings feeding our cat'. Years later Stonham is a Home Office minister and wouldn't do a thing. I had people writing him letters from outside when I was in but he had his nose in the trough and he was going to keep it there. And that's how I see Blair and this gang today.

Prisoners fightback

Woodhill – repression intensifies

On 7 August supporters of prisoners in Woodhill Closed Supervision Centre (CSC) stood in the pouring rain to let those incarcerated in Britain's most ruthless and brutal regime know that they are not forgotten and never will be. DOMENYK NOONAN reports from inside Woodhill on the Prisoners' Justice Day demonstration.



The prison authorities feared an angry backlash and a vast majority of screws left their cars at home, travelling by taxi, for which the governor refused to bear the cost. However, the taxpayer will no doubt have to foot the bill for the approximately 100 police used to protect the prison from the 30-plus protesters, who showed respect and dignity towards other visitors to the prison.

I was moved to Whitemoor on spurious grounds three days before the protest. They also moved Chris Brasher to the segregation unit where they beat him merely for shouting out of his door 'What do we want? Close the Unit! When do we want it? Now!'

When I returned from my 'lie-down', I was downgraded to the Basic regime unit. This means you are fed through your door, unlocked with six screws in mufti gear, walk to showers and exercise with hands constantly on head. If at any time you move them before ordered to, you will be attacked. On D wing we are not allowed radios. We sleep on the floor. We have no cell windows and the cells are infested with cockroaches which crawl out of the open drainage outside our cell doors.

May I take this opportunity, on behalf of all the lads on the CSC, to thank the friends and families who stood outside in the rain, especially Warren Slaney's dad, who is a great man and has stood by his son through thick and thin.

I intend to write a book about this shit-hole and what they get up to. In

the meantime, please keep the pressure on. Write to MPs and ask them what is going on. My best wishes to all the lads in Full Sutton who took part in the strike to support us.

Since writing this article, Domenyk has been moved to Full Sutton prison and the Director of High Security Prisons has announced yet another new variation on the CSC theme – a special unit for the country's three 'most dangerous' men. These are apparently Reg Wilson (to whom FRFI is indebted for many a brilliant illustration), Charles Bronson, ironically one of the few prisoners to actually 'progress' through the levels at Woodhill, and Robert Mawdsley, who has been in solitary confinement longer than any other serving prisoner and was on Enhanced regime at the Durham CSC, prior to an 'administrative' move to Wakefield.

Letters of protest about human rights abuses in the Woodhill CSC should be sent to the new Prisons Minister, ex-'left-winger', ex-'radical' lawyer, ex-Labour Party Black Sections, Paul Boateng, at the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.

Prisoners strike at Full Sutton

As mentioned in Domenyk's article, Prisoners Justice Day was commemorated at Full Sutton prison by a well supported work strike. The following week prisoners on three wings refused to work for a second day, this time in protest at the introduction of yet another humiliating pilot phone system. Full Sutton prisoners have been the guinea-pigs for the Prison Service's phone-card experiments since 1995, when 'PIN' machines

were installed, forcing prisoners to register numbers for security clearance, prior to being issued with a smart-card with which to ring them. In the latest twist, calls will now begin with a digital message informing the receiver they are being called from a prison.

FRFI congratulates all those prisoners who organised the work-strikes. It isn't easy to take such action in the face of the threat of adjudications, loss of 'privileges', ghosting or bad parole reports which will rebound later. But solidarity is strength and the fact that participation, although not total, was widespread, has meant that so far no-one has been picked off or punished.

John Bowden on protest

John Bowden is a life-sentence prisoner who has campaigned consistently for the human rights of all prisoners and has written numerous articles for FRFI about the prison struggle. John is currently in the segregation unit at Long Lartin, having been consigned there by a 'Rule 45 board' which supposedly discussed his individual suitability for the seg and then issued him with a piece of

paper giving identical reasons to those given to everyone else in segregation. The seg conditions included a humiliating ritual, in which four or five screws in riot gear are present every time the cell is unlocked and the prisoner is forced to kneel at the back wall. On 6 September John began a dirty protest, which he and between two and four others have been on ever since. Since 13 September he has also been on hunger-strike. The water in the cells has been turned off, so access to clean, fresh water is entirely restricted to the whims of prison officers. John has been repeatedly threatened by prison officers and is prevented from sleeping by them hammering on his door and turning the lights on and off. None of his letters are being sent out, although we think letters sent in are still being delivered. We therefore urge readers to send cards and messages of solidarity to John Bowden B41173, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ. Send letters of protest to the governor at the same address or fax them on 01386 832834.

New Ombudsman

Prison Reform Trust Director Stephen Shaw has been appointed the new Prisons Ombudsman. Whether the 'liberal' reformer, who Michael Howard considered too left wing for the job, will now prove more or less useful to prisoners than ex-admiral Sir Peter Woodhead remains to be seen. He could begin by taking up some of the cases mentioned on this page. ■

Reviews

I married a communist

Philip Roth, Vintage, 1998, £6.99

The well-known author, Philip Roth, usually writes about the Jewish community in the United States and readers may have seen the Hollywood film of his novel *Goodbye Columbus* or read the hilarious *Portnoy's Complaint* about Jewish adolescence in immigrant, middle-class America. *I married a communist* is about the 1940s and 1950s and the impact of the House of Un-American Activities on members of the Communist Party, 'fellow travellers' (supporters) and indeed all progressive thinkers and activists in the era of the Cold War. It is fiction, of course, but rooted in real times, experiences and people and the main public events in the novel are historically true.

The novel tells of the characters who 'won' as well as those who 'lost' in the witch-hunt of Senator Joe McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade. For every 20 school teachers or union organisers who were sacked and plunged into hardship, there was one successful politician who gained money, influence and advantage for themselves in the newly emerging corporate America. Here we find Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon and others who climbed on the bandwagon and accused those who opposed them of treachery, subversion and a risk to the security of the state and the 'American way of life'.

At the same time the novel evokes an almost forgotten American tradition of 'blue-collar' trades unionism and collectivist attitudes that have since been crushed by contemporary consumerism and media control. This was the culture of 'the little man'

the 'regular guy' who stood up for justice and common sense. Abraham Lincoln was reinvented as the representative of the decency of commonfolk, 'With malice towards none, with charity for all'.

The Communist Party of the USA was actively leading this tradition of progressives and idealists and worked in the trades unions where 'justice' was the watchword. But in the 1950s the hammer blow of reaction came down on their heads; communists were expelled from public office and the trades unions. The Soviet Union, once a World War II ally, became the chief enemy. Young Americans were sent to fight in Korea while in the US itself African Americans were excluded from the postwar economic boom in jobs and wages. In the face of such challenges, as the economic boom itself seemed to make a mockery of communism compared to the advantages of capitalism, well then, the Communist Party collapsed and, for all practical purposes, died. How it died for some of its members and how some of its members died, is what this novel is about. A good read with some real anger and humour, this novel is highly recommended. There is only one word of warning – the two main characters who tell the story are both wise and reactionary. How much better to be like the real hero of the novel, foolish but revolutionary!

Susan Davidson



Rhythmic Revolutionaries

directed by Jim Carey, Small World Productions. Broadcast: The Other Side, Channel 4, 16 September, 3.10am

Jim Carey's film will have brought back many memories to any of last year's Rock around the Blockade brigadistas who were able to endure Channel 4's late-night scheduling. The opening landscape scenes of the hills around Fomento and sands skirting Trinidad de Cuba were certainly enough to rouse me from TV stupor and even managed to induce a slight quickening of the pulse.

Soapbox: see this show!

Soapbox cabaret are taking their satirical show to the Labour Party conference this year and FRFI caught up with them at the Hackney Empire studio. Loads of laughs and great songs at the expense of the control freak tendency of the Labour Party. Bill Clinton and William Hague, complete with baby's dummy, are derided and lampooned in a witty script by John Rogers. Spin doctors, focus groups and Blair babes are all given the treatment and a genetically

Rhythmic Revolutionaries set out to document Rock around the Blockade brigadistas delivering a sound system to the Union of Young Communists in Sancti Spiritus province. While this was indeed the main purpose of the brigade, it was complemented by visits – many of which were impromptu – to clinics, schools, co-operative and state farms and work sessions in the coffee fields near Fomento; all of which demonstrated Cuban socialism in action. From the outset, Jim was never slow to remind the viewer that Cuba's current economic plight is due to the 40-year-long US blockade.

Some of the footage might have puzzled brigadistas who have no recollection of visiting a cigar factory or witnessing street rumba but this, I assume, must have been filmed during Jim's extended travels after the brigade had returned to Britain. However, the unexplained footage of bootleg cigarette production caused me some concern. C'mon, Jim, what was that all about? If you felt a need to show the clip, you have a responsibility to explain the circumstances and motivation behind it...

In all, *Rhythmic Revolutionaries* made good viewing and offers one brigadista's Cuban diary in a novel and stimulating way. As an account of the brigade it is – like this review – highly subjective and therefore open to disagreement. I feel that Jim would want it no other way.

Rory Beaton

Rhythmic Revolutionaries will be shown at the next Rock around the Blockade meeting in London on Monday 4 October, 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

modified cauliflower has to be forcibly restrained during a sketch entitled 'Stop the crops/Kill the cows'. Given his recent attempt at satire, perhaps Alastair Campbell should be asked to help write the script. During the conference they will perform daily at 10pm from 26 September to 1 October at The Roundhouse Hotel in Bourne-mouth and they intend to return to London for an extended run. John Rogers of Soapbox can be contacted on 0171 359 9113 or e-mailed at soapbox_cabaret@hotmail.com.

Richard Roques

Forward with FRFI

Over the summer FRFI supporters were active on the streets supporting Cuba, campaigning against poverty pay and taking a stand against racism. Many of these activities are reported elsewhere, but two in particular are of note. The first was a protest against police racism in London. FRFI comrades supported a picket of Stoke Newington police station in protest against the death while in custody of yet another black person, Sarah Thomas. Since then it seems to be open season in Hackney, where police have shot two people in separate incidents. Readers should be prepared to join in the protests that will emerge as the community prepares to mobilise. It is bad enough that this is one of the most impoverished areas in northern Europe without suffering the continuous harassment of the murderous racist police.

Meanwhile, comrades in the northwest supported a stall and street meeting organised by People Against Global Imperialism in protest against the bombing campaign against Iraq. Taking a defiantly anti-imperialist stance, they attracted a lot of attention through the stall's graphic displays of the effects of depleted uranium munitions. The protest makes a refreshing change from the traditional left obsessions with trade union and Labour Party committees.

There is a full agenda of activities up and down the country over the next couple of months, some of which are listed on this page. We urge our readers to join and make a difference. We need to build a movement against this monstrous government and the system it defends. We know the rest of the left will try to stop this from happening because of their ties to the Labour Party and trade union officialdom. Now is the time to do something!

London FRFI

Wednesday 27 October, 7.30pm
East Tower and Indonesia - The politics of a Tiger Economy Venue to be arranged

Wednesday 1 December 7.30pm:
Poverty in Britain - causes and solutions
Phone for venue details which will be at a central London college

Preston FRFI

FRFI readers' group meetings: all at The Stanley Arms (upstairs), Lancaster Road, Preston starting at 7.30pm
Wednesday 6 October, Wednesday 3 November, Wednesday 8 December

Manchester FRFI

FRFI readers' group meetings: all at The Hare and Hounds (upstairs), Shudehill, Manchester starting at 7.30pm:
Tuesday 19 October, Tuesday 16 November, Tuesday 7 December

Blackburn

Fight poverty pay! campaign meetings in Blackburn at Banger Street Community Centre, Brookhouse, Blackburn starting at 7.30pm: Wednesday 13 October, Wednesday 17 November

Midlands FRFI

30 October: Leicester public meeting on East Tower at St Peter's Tenants Association, Melbourne Road, Highfields. Starts at 2.00pm.

3 November: Lincoln Marxism Study Group: first meeting. For further details, phone 01400 230 151

Fighting Fund

Fight racism! Fight Imperialism! has maintained its price for 10 years now despite rising costs. We now face two choices: either we have an annual fund drive, or we raise the cover price of the paper. We know that for some people 50p represents a significant amount, and we are therefore keen to keep the non-waged price to 30p. Hence we have decided to institute a regular fund drive. In order to cover our costs, and to make sure that we have an adequately equipped office to produce the paper, we need to raise £3,000, or £500 per issue.

You, our readership, are the people we depend on. Our paper is the only one to have consistently exposed Labour for what it is: a ruling class party. Whilst the rest of the left maintain their links with the Labour Party through its increasingly irrelevant left-wing, FRFI has championed outright opposition to Labour as the only way to build a new movement of the working class. FRFI has consistently defended the gains of the Cuban revolution, showing why this is essential if we are to build a socialist current in Britain. Whilst others on the left have increasingly accepted the so-called Peace Process in Ireland, FRFI has shown how this is just another attempt by British imperialism to maintain its stranglehold on the Irish people as a whole. Without FRFI there would be no publication setting out a consistent anti-imperialist position in this country. With your support we can keep it going.



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ROCK ON with Rock around the Blockade

A rum dol

On 13 August, Rock around the Blockade launched its campaign against the anti-Cuban rum company with a protest outside Bacardi's HQ in Weybridge, Surrey. When we arrived, the building was mysteriously closed and prominent Bacardi signs had disappeared. Despite a 'closed for refurbishment' answerphone message, no workmen were visible. Local police stopped us on our way and seemed to know our plans, although press releases had only gone out a few minutes before! It was clear that Bacardi knew we were coming and had cleared out for the day. Undeterred, we staged a protest which was reported in the local newspaper, the Surrey Comet.

This was followed by a picket of Bar Cubana in Waterloo, which received £12,000 in a deal to stock exclusively Bacardi rum. The bar is coated in posters of triumphant Che, Fidel and the insignia of the revolution. 'Change to Havana Club rum', we said, 'Or drop the Cuban image.' The manager eventually agreed to reconsider stocking Havana Club.

Regular Boycott Bacardi street stalls were held throughout the summer in Lincoln, Scunthorpe, Nottingham and Birmingham and stalls and leafletting have also taken place in colleges. Back on the streets 'editing' of Bacardi billboards has taken place.

In the northwest, new Bacardi adverts on billboards have kept comrades busy, with 'Bacardi - est Cuba 1862' soon amended on sites in

Manchester to read 'Bacardi - BOYCOTT! More pickets, stalls and other activities are planned around the country. Isn't it time you got involved? Rock around the Blockade can provide Boycott Bacardi action packs, stickers, leaflets and petitions to take to your local bars/pubs/off licences/college bars and advice about how to set up your own local campaign. Bacardi's provocative propaganda on billboards and bus shelters could inspire you to some creative activity. Or how about focusing on your local supermarket, always keen to respond to consumer demand? Whatever your ideas, fax, phone, e-mail or write - but get in touch and get active.

Music for the youth of Cuba

Meanwhile, we continue to raise money for a sound system for the youth of Cuba in support of the Cuban Union of Young Communists. In August a group of activists met up on Brighton beach for the annual CSC Cuba Festival and raised loads of money to the sound of salsa music and a live band. Over the summer London raised over £600 towards the sound system mainly through a magnificent club night; the Midlands raised £300 with fund-raising parties and car-boot sales.

The new college terms offers opportunities to spread our message at freshers' fairs around the country.

A successful stall was held at the University of Central Lancashire Preston site and a Rock around the

Blockade society has been re-established there. Stalls were also held in Manchester at the Metropolitan University and Manchester University. At Manchester Met, a student union executive member told us that Bacardi reps regularly meet with student union bar managements to justify their 'global strategy' and keep union bars stocking Bacardi.

In London there are societies at University College London and Queen Mary and Westfield College (QMw), and in Bristol a new group of enthusiasts hope to be taking the Cuba Vive Society forward into the next century! Our most recent new society is being set up in Cardiff University, despite student union opposition (see box). Please contact us if you can help at any of the above societies or would like to set up your own society.

Cardiff University Students Union attempts to stifle Cuba society

When, as a new student at Cardiff, I set about organising a student society in solidarity with Cuba, I was given an application form and told I needed to get 20 signed-up members. Within a week I had 20 names. When I tried to book a room for the election of officers, the student union refused, saying the application must be handed in first. It was a vicious circle: without having elected the officers, I couldn't hand in the application form.

The student union magazine for new students promises new societies that, once they have their 20 members, Mike Thomas, SU general secretary, 'will sort you out'. Far from sorting me out, he refused to allocate us a table at the societies fair. Despite having no table we went around the main hall asking people to join only to be confronted by the general secretary who told to leave as we were 'not yet a society'.

The reasons for these delaying, bureaucratic tactics became clear when we were asked to defend our aims and



Rock around the Blockade's work was recently highlighted on Channel 4 in *Rhythmic Revolutionaries* (see review page 13), by freelance journalist Jim Carey who came on our last brigade to Cuba. If you would be interested in taking part in our brigade to Guantanamo, in the eastern part of Cuba, in spring 2000, contact us now.

Events

London

Next campaign meeting, Monday 4 October, 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, (Holborn tube). Video showing of *Rhythmic Revolutionaries* and discussion of next brigade.

Northwest

Introductory meetings: Defend socialist Cuba University of Central Lancashire, Wednesday 29 September, 1.30pm, Room 128, Harrington Building, Preston.

Manchester Metropolitan University: Wednesday 6 October, 1.30pm. Contact the campaign for details.

Sponsored walk over Kinder Scout, Derbyshire Sunday 17 October Tel: 01254 679605 for sponsorship forms and more details.

Midlands

Cuba stall and display at Human Rights Fair, University of Lincoln, Friday 22 October, starting at 7.30pm and all day Saturday 23 October. Lincoln RATB will be giving a seminar on Cuba. For further details contact 01400 230151.

27 November, 2.30pm Birmingham public meeting: Boycott Bacardi! Sparkhill Social and Cultural Centre (by library and swimming baths), Stratford Road, Sparkhill.

For more information about Rock around the Blockade, write to BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel 0171 637 1688.

Viktor Bournekov

CHOOSE THE RCG

If you believe that the treachery of the opportunist British Labour and trade union movement must be challenged, then there is no alternative - Join the RCG!

I would like to join/receive more information about the RCG ☐

I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group ☐

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website: http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk

From within the USA

Thank you for sending FRFI 149 (June/July 1999) and for your analysis of the incredible and boldfaced genocide against the people of the Balkans, totally unprovoked, unnecessary (for 'reasons' mentioned by the aggressors but necessary to intimidate all the world's little nations), in violation of the United Nations charter. Not even Hitler was so bold, likely because Hitler never had the monopoly on power the US now has.

And thanks for your continued support of Cuba and close cooperation with the UJC. I take it that Guantanamo being the next goal for Rock around the Blockade a campaign means that the Trinidad disco project was completed successfully. Good

job! Very likely your finished discotheque is among the best ten dancing spots in all of Cuba - outside Havana!

I have no news from Cuba, none at all. If FRFI's offer in 1997 to buy me a sub to *Granma Internacional* (which I donated to the Trinidad disco) is renewable by some generous person, I could use it. Pathfinder in New York has prisoner subs for about \$35.

Here we witness all sorts of bizarre political manoeuvres by the powers. 'Exploratory committees' galore, George W. Bush resigning his \$110,000 a year salary as Texas governor to run for president. Of course, he does not need that money at all, a prime member as he is of the 'silver spoon baby club', born into

multimillionaire families. Big money pushing him - to the extent of also forfeiting federal campaign funds so as not to be bound by federal campaign spending limits. It's no secret - he said so to the media. So plentiful money there.

Then there is Clinton running for senate for Arkansas and Mrs Clinton running for senate for New York City. It's not even different Tweedledums and Tweedledums for each election but the same recycled ones. And harder to tell apart from each other by the day.

ANA LUCIA GELABERT #384484
1401 State School Road - Riverside
Gatesville TX 76599-0001
USA

Destroy the POA

I enjoyed your piece 'Wormwood Scrubs' in FRFI 150. Reading about the relationship between the government and the POA, I couldn't but help detect similarities with Thatcher's relationship with the NUM.

Governments employing the capitalist mode of production view the population simply as some huge workforce trudging back and forth to the factories with their heads down and eyes closed, in other words playing what Noam Chomsky called a 'spectator role', who are occasionally allowed to push a few buttons.

Naturally workers who say 'Hold on a minute, what's going on here? We're doing all the work blab blab' are immediately labelled 'militant troublemakers'. Governments and trade unions are therefore mutually in conflict. The union becomes a thorn in the side of the big boss.

Criminals are society's pariahs, its scapegoats. The vast majority are disadvantaged, unemployed,

living lives of abject poverty and misery. Criminal acts - who decides they do wrong? - are symptoms of an underlying problem: economic disequilibrium. As industry, production, becomes more competitive and technologically advanced, the need for labour diminishes, overtaken by the race for efficiency.

Gradually there is the diversion of labour towards a metaphorical cul-de-sac. Of course the state ministry of misinformation puts it another way: 'lazy, spongers, evil, this bad element who the "good ones" need to be protected from'.

'Tough on crime', 'zero tolerance', 'two strikes' - with these words, the state reinforces this idea that criminals are society's unclean, who should be shut away from the world.

With more thrown on the scrapheap the state builds up its defences - more police, bigger prisons, more prison officers, its state apparatus of repression. Meanwhile, the ministry of

misinformation works around the clock - we are at war against urban terror!

The POA believe they're at one with the state, enjoying a sort of unity, that they have a black cheque. They are seduced by this delusion. The reality is that the state, while extolling the virtues of being a prison officer, police officer etc is actually operating a policy of divide and rule and couldn't care less.

From that perspective, prison officers have betrayed their class, become traitors and in doing so have shored up the capitalist defences. As you suggest, the state isn't remotely interested in humanity. The current focus on the POA is that of 1986 and Thatcher's focus on the NUM - to destroy it. From a prisoner's perspective, that couldn't come quick enough.

MARK STONER-SEED
HMP Long Lartin,
South Littleton, Evesham,
Worcestershire WR11 5TZ

Wrong on Molotov- Ribbentrop

With reference to your article on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 (FRFI 150) - No, no, not Wrong, wrong, wrong! There was nothing 'inevitable' about the situation that the USSR faced in 1939, far much of it was produced by Stalin's mismanagement and wishfulness. Examples include not only the direct precedent of civil war in Spain but also the joint strike between German communists and the NSDAP of 1932 and orders for the Chinese Communist Party to merge with the quasi-fascist Kuo Ming Tang. All avoidable disasters which could have brought relief to the embattled revolution if handled otherwise.

It is true that conventional academia seems to be holding a major inquiry concerning why Stalin failed to see the oncoming



blitzkrieg in 1941, but they fail to see that by then Stalin had executed anyone who may have had so much as half a brain to see it coming: Tukachevsky, Bukharin, Trotsky, all murdered. We should also remember the intellectual climate of the time, producing such commentators as James Burnham, who began to push the line of Nazism and Stalinism as 'twins'. Indeed, Trotsky pointed out that twins may be the bitterest of enemies, and still called for the defence of Russia despite the Pact, which he clearly considered the crime of the century.

Being generous, I think FRFI/RCG gets itself into these muddles precisely because you reject Trotsky absolutely (without reaching for the ice-pick, I concede), which leaves the matter of how to classify the direction of the 1917 revolution. Certainly, Lenin woke up to the problem virtually on his deathbed and Trotsky, besides being rather inept as a practical everyday politician, took far too long in his assessment. But his *Revolution Betrayed* is a very cogent analysis of the internal contradictions of the USSR which led Stalin to power, and incidentally seems to anticipate the collapse of the regime in 1989-91 (p300, Pathfinder 1970).

The lesson certainly seems to be: never dabble with fascism, never use it to play off an opponent and certainly never sign Faustian pacts with it. Indeed, always make working alliances with those who are prepared to fight it. Dialectical formulae are not always a substitute for commonsense and if something seems consensual, mad or disgusting (as the pact of 1939), it probably is.

FLEUR DU MAL

Déjà vu

I have just come across an article by Harpal Brar, Socialist Labour Party Executive member, in the September/October issue of *Lalkar*. Entitled 'The military strategy of British imperialism', it was a report he had given on behalf of the SLP to a seminar in Brussels. As I read it, however, I thought: I've seen this somewhere before. And sure enough, when I went back to Trevor Rayne's excellent article in FRFI 145 on Labour's military strategy ('A force for good: Labour's strategic review'), I found that Harpal Brar had lifted large chunks of it - nearly 20 separate items, in fact. Since he does not acknowledge his source, is he not guilty of plagiarism? And what about the SLP itself, if this represents its position?

DEAN PORTER
Liverpool

Editorial Board: Thank you for drawing this to our attention. We are very happy for comrades to use FRFI as a source, provided they acknowledge it. That is just courtesy and comradely behaviour. Cde Brar has however failed to do this on many occasions when he has, as you say, 'lifted' FRFI material. Whether the SLP Executive knew that cde Brar was pilfering off FRFI material as their position we cannot say.

From Timor to Chiapas International day of action Picket the US Embassy in opposition to US-sponsored intervention

Grosvenor Square
near Bond St or Marble Arch tubes
Tuesday 12 October 5-7pm

Sponsored by Mexico Support Group,
Jeremy Corbyn, Zapatista Action
Project and others
Details MSG tel: 0181 679 6930

Liverpool

**People against Global
Imperialism**

Stall and street
meetings in Church Street
(near Littlewoods)
**SAY NO TO WAR
AGAINST IRAQ**

**Saturday 16 October
Saturday 30 October
Saturday 13 November
All starting at 1.00pm**

Erratum

It has been drawn to our attention by Mukhtar from north London that the article in FRFI 150 'Freedom for Kashmir' contained an error concerning the name of the Rajah of Kashmir. His name was Hari Singh Dogra, not Sheikh Abdullah. Secondly, Sheikh Abdullah was a Muslim, not a Hindu, and he is known as the Lion of Kashmir for launching a 'Quit Kashmir' movement against the Rajah Hari Singh Dogra and his British masters.

Apology

We inadvertently omitted to put a credit on the picture of the June 18 anti-capitalist protest used on p3 of FRFI 150, which was taken by photographer Ian Hunter. We apologise for the omission.

'Left' Labour hypocrites

On 21 September at Conway Hall in London, John Pilger gave an informative and inspiring speech about the situation in East Timor, the role of the Indonesian state and military, and the duplicitous role of the imperialist powers who are now sending in so-called peacekeeping forces.

It was ironic, therefore, that those sharing the platform with Pilger should have been the SWP and 'Labour left' MPs such as Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn. These apologists for Labour imperialism refuse to tackle the questions of the relationship of the Labour government to big business, the ideology behind the 'peace keepers' going into East Timor, the role of the United Nations and so on. The SWP and Labour left played the same role, via the Aid to Yugoslavia Campaign (formerly Campaign for Peace in the Balkans), in covering

up the real role being played by Labour.

What an insult to the East Timorese who have fought back valiantly against the murderous Indonesian military for 23 years that a large meeting organised in London to support the East Timorese should be applauding two members of the very Labour Party which armed the Indonesian military even while they denied it.

As Pilger said, people need to wake up to the fact that our 'liberal democracies' are masters of all that which is communally associated with 'totalitarian regimes'. Let us redouble our efforts to expose the Labour Party for what it has done in opposition and continues to do in government.

KATH & ED ATKINSON
North London

Sports, drugs and lies - new US smear against Cuba

It is a curious fact that probably most people in the imperialist countries had not heard of Cuban high jumper world record-holder Javier Sotomayor until a few weeks ago, when the news broke that he had tested positive for cocaine. As Fidel Castro put it, Sotomayor 'could not have imagined the accusation of cocaine consumption when he amply cleared 2.30 metres in a single jump, as he had done 300 times throughout his brilliant career... he had previously undergone 100 doping tests... where the slightest trace of drugs or anabolic steroids was never found.' (quoted in *Granma Internacional*, 12 September)

The frame-up took place at the Pan-American Games in Winnipeg, Canada. The Canadian authorities conducted the test, if such it can be termed, and their interest in ensuring it came out positive was clear: they wanted Canada to replace Cuba in second place in the medals list and they (together with the Cuban exiled mafia) wanted the US to replace Cuba in first place in the high jump. Over the same four days, two Cuban weightlifters were stripped of their medals on the

same grounds - again, totally baseless, since the Cuban sporting authorities had tests conducted on both of them in Madrid and Barcelona, both totally negative. Meanwhile the Cuban boxing team - probably the world's strongest - withdrew from the World Amateur Boxing Championships in Houston, Texas, as a protest against biased refereeing, most of it directed against the Cubans (officials from the ex-socialist bloc were among the worst culprits).

It is clear that Yankee imperialism (and its Canadian junior partners) are no more reconciled to Cuba's good example in the field of sports, where it serves as a permanent counterweight to the rampant commercialisation of sport in the West, than they are to its example in the spheres of health and education, the most successful in Latin America despite the efforts of the Yankee blockade to ruin them.

MIKE WEBBER
Aylesbury

See our article on this issue, page 16

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**FIGHT
RACISM**

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

CUBA VIVE

Boycott Bacardi!

Smash the US blockade!



International Seminar on Neoliberalism, Havana

In August I attended, on behalf of the RCG, the first international youth and student seminar on neoliberalism, organised by Cuba's Union of Young Communists (UJC) and other youth and student organisations. 548 delegates took part, representing 63 countries and 126 organisations. The aim of the event was to achieve coordinated actions on an international scale.

The seminar was a response to the worldwide onslaught of neoliberalism following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Its focus was the effect on young people who have often borne the brunt of these attacks in the form of increased unemployment, low pay, 'flexible' working, underfunding of education and health and so on. These conditions have led to increasing inequality, illiteracy, drug and alcohol abuse, antisocial behaviour and criminality. The seminar was a rallying call to the youth of the world to stand up, fight back and make a difference. We heard about struggles around the world, students' and workers' movements in South Korea and Iran, the dockers and Reclaim the Streets in Britain, the movement in Chiapas.

I had been asked by the UJC to give a presentation in the workshop on 'Youth and Marginality'. I focused on the wholehearted acceptance of neoliberalism by the forces of social democracy and the need for us to 'reinvent ourselves', increasingly outside and in opposition to the formal labour movement. Next day, in a workshop on the environment I developed the point, arguing that only socialism offered a way forward. Inevitably, I encountered vocal opposition from the social democrats present, in particular those representing the Spanish Socialist Party. But these are precisely the forces we need to combat if a new movement is to be built.

Following the seminar I returned to Britain, having met many inspiring comrades from Latin America, the USA and Canada who reaffirmed my determination to build a movement for socialism here.

Future dates:
20 October Latin America Day of Action against Neoliberalism
25-26 October International days of solidarity with Colombia

1-4 April 2000 Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students, Havana - open to delegates from around the world. For more information see next FRFI and our website <http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk/>
Zoe Green

The history of Bacardi rum is inextricably tied up with that of US imperialism's role in Cuba. After fleeing Cuba in 1959, Bacardi has used every means at its disposal to attempt to destroy the Revolution, including backing the terrorist acts of Miami-based Cuban counter-revolutionaries. So prominent was Bacardi's role in drawing up the Helms-Burton Act that it has been ironically referred to as the 'Helms-Bacardi protection act'. Bacardi has repeatedly lobbied US senate members to take a stand against Cuba, most recently by amending US budget legislation to ensure it could market its own 'Havana Club' rum with impunity, in breach of international trade law. US imperialism and Bacardi are working together towards a single goal: the destruction of socialist Cuba. Let us be clear, therefore: any campaign to boycott Bacardi and expose the hideous hypocrisy of its 'Cuban' image is, directly, a blow against the criminal US blockade.

Such a campaign, launched by Rock around the Blockade this August has been warmly welcomed by the Cubans. A report of our activities outside Bacardi HQ and the text of our briefing document *What you should know about Bacardi* have been published in full for two consecutive weeks (5 and 12 September) in *Granma Internacional*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, as well as appearing in the Communist Youth newspaper, *Juventud Rebelde*, in Cuba.

Boycott Bacardi is a campaign whose time has come, judging by the warm response in colleges and on the streets throughout the country. It offers those eager to campaign

against the US blockade a concrete focus and the possibility of creating a vibrant, imaginative and active movement in solidarity with Cuba.

The possibility now exists for a campaign on an international scale. In Canada, Belgium, Italy and Spain organisations are already in the process of setting up anti-Bacardi campaigns. At a recent Eurosolidarity conference in London, organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and attended by Rock around the Blockade, delegates from Germany, Finland, France, Chile and Ireland eagerly took our leaflets and informa-



lion packs to use in their own work.

It was a shock, therefore, to find the one organisation present opposed to a Boycott Bacardi campaign should be the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Knowing we would be raising the issue at the conference's Commission on Campaigns, they had carefully briefed Elio Ramas, the representative from ICAP (Cuban Institute for Friendship between Peoples) through which all CSC aid to Cuba is channelled. Our call for a boycott of Bacardi - which mentioned the CSC's official approval of such a campaign at its last AGM - was enthusiastically received. But barely had the applause died away when the ICAP representative offered his 'personal view': such a campaign would be inappropriate, simply provide more publicity for Bacardi and create a distraction from the real business of opposing the US blockade. Setting aside the fact that the only real work the CSC is likely to be distracted from is lobbying Labour and TUC conferences, it is clear, given the support we have already received from Cuba for the campaign, that this was a put-up job. This is not the first time the CSC has attempted

to undermine Rock around the Blockade's work. Yet after Colombian journalist Hernando Calvo Ospina, who has recently published a book on the activities of Miami-based Cuban counter-revolutionaries, listed other countries where such work is underway, the ICAP representative backed down. Clearly, such a campaign becomes acceptable to the CSC, on paper at least, so long as it can be completely disassociated from Rock around the Blockade. A proposal for Europe-wide anti-Bacardi work made its way into the commission's final report. However, CSC delegates from Blackburn were later overheard denouncing us for even raising the issue in the commission! What is their problem? Rock around the Blockade is not interested in 'owning' this campaign: we simply want to build an active movement in solidarity with socialist Cuba. Any CSC members who feel such a movement is preferable to the sectarian posturing of the CSC should take up the Boycott Bacardi campaign now.

To get involved in the Boycott Bacardi campaign, see page 14 for details.

Political warfare waged against Cuban athletes

During a televised appearance before Cuban and foreign press in early September, Fidel Castro denounced as a 'shameful fraud' and 'colossal lie' the doping accusations made against three Cuban weightlifters and the world record high jumper Javier Sotomayor at the Winnipeg Pan American Games. Such allegations, he said, were part of 'a dirty and ruthless political warfare... waged against our athletes and our country'.

In the case of Sotomayor, even before the testing was complete, news was leaked, almost certainly from the laboratory itself, linking him with a doping problem. Very quickly it was announced that the test had shown the presence of a 'large quantity of cocaine'. The gold medal won by Sotomayor in the high jump was withdrawn. One of the foremost representatives of Cuban sport, was being accused of being a habitual user of cocaine, of consuming a drug with such a volatile presence - it disappears from the body in at most a few days - that there was no possibility whatsoever of using scientific means to prove irrefutably that it was a fraud. The choice of



One of the Cuban weightlifters wrongly accused of using the steroid nandrolone

cocaine was also significant in that it not only discredits the athlete but also Cuba. The Cubans are determined to stand by Sotomayor and have not the slightest doubt of his innocence.

According to the laboratory Sotomayor was said to have taken a high dose of cocaine on or around the day of competition on 30 July. Yet if he had done so he would not even have been able to get out of bed, much less jump 2.30 metres at the first attempt. In addition there were numerous violations of the rigorous regulations and established norms for testing ath-

letes in such laboratories. Before being tested Sotomayor was given three bottles of water to drink so that he could provide a urine sample instead of being given a choice of drinks from a refrigerator, as is usual. The urine sample delivered to the laboratory was marked so that it could be identified. When the Cuban representative was present to witness the B sample test, it couldn't be done due to 'equipment failure' and was then unsealed and out of reach of the athlete's representative for some time before the test was repeated. Finally, in his long and successful career, Sotomayor has undergone more than 100 tests, 15 in the last eight months, with not the slightest trace of drugs or anabolic steroids.

Evidence of fraud was also found when three medal-winning Cuban weightlifters tested positive for nandrolone - an anabolic steroid - on 3 and 4 August. Again there were irregularities in the testing. In one case the test result was publicised on 2 August, before the test took place on 3 August! A special station was set up for testing only the Cubans. They were not given a choice of drinks before the test took place.

Here, however, there was a real possibility of disproving the charge. Nandrolone stays in the body for more than six months. It is called ironically 'doping for dopes' because whereas its effects last only three weeks, it can be traced in the body for about six months. Cuba was able to take samples of all of the Cuban weightlifters who had competed at the games on 7, 8 and 9 August after they returned to Havana. The samples were taken to three of the five European laboratories asked and able to carry out the tests - six were tested in Madrid, seven in Lisbon and seven in Barcelona. In the 20 samples tested there was not a single report on the presence of nandrolone, nor was a single member of the weightlifting team found guilty of doping.

The Cubans are determined to defend the honour of their athletes and have their medals restored. They have appealed to the International Amateur Athletics Federation on the basis of having exposed, what Castro has called 'the monstrous conspiracy orchestrated in Winnipeg against athletes representing Cuba.'

David Yaffe